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EXPLORING THE MUSEUM OF WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC

END OF THE WORLD NEWS TRUMP AND THE RAPTURE INDEX

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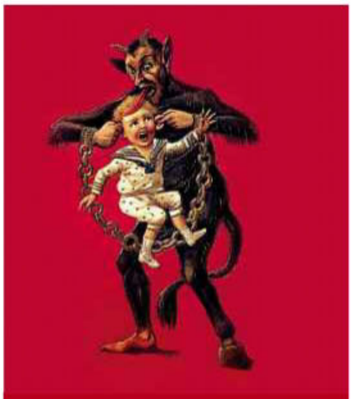

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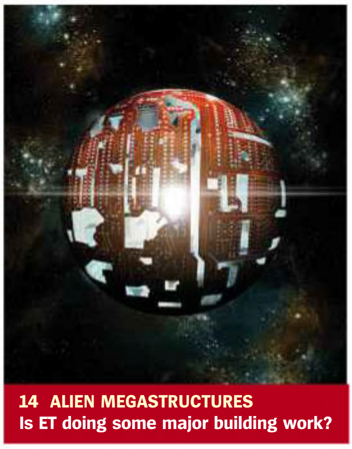

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strange days

Bouffant baby, a bit of the Buddha, award-winning Goat Man, more creepy clowns, sea monster versus U-Boat, British big cat sightings, in search of the Wollaton Park gnomes, where have all the aliens gone? – and much more.

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26 THE CHANGING MASK OF KRAMPUS

Mixing mediæval superstition with 19th century Catholicism, the devilish figure of Krampus has undergone a surprising revival in recent years. **AL RIDENOUR** reconnects with the dark side of Christmas, tracing Krampus's roots in Austro-German folklore and exploring the figure's growing popularity in the 21st century.

34 OUT OF THE SHADOWS

In an extract from a new book celebrating the history of Boscastle's Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, **PROFESSOR RONALD HUTTON** introduces the photographs of **SARA HANNANT**, which aim to bring a range of enigmatic objects from the museum's unique collection to life.

40 THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

One of the most fortean of lightning phenomena is the "lightning daguerreotype," where a face or figure, often recognised as a particular deceased person, is mysteriously etched upon a windowpane. **CHRIS WOODYARD** traces some of the fenestral flaps of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

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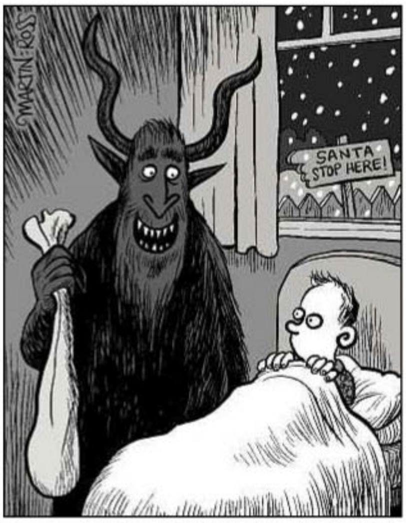
editorial

Naughty or nice?

INTERESTING TIMES

As we prepare to say goodbye to 2016, few will disagree that it's been an interesting year, with major bombshells shaking political certainties on both sides of the pond. Perhaps, as forteans, we ought to expect the unexpected; but like the rest of the world, we're certainly wondering what, in particular, the surprise election of Donald Trump will mean for the future. Perhaps we should turn to the prophecies of that modern-day Nostradamus, the blind Bulgarian seer Baba Vanga (1911-1996), whose followers credit her with correctly predicting everything from 9/11 to the Kursk submarine disaster and the election of a black president of the United States. One prophecy that's been doing the rounds again is that the 44th POTUS – yes, that'll be Barack Obama – will also be the last, before the country is plunged into economic and social chaos bordering on civil war. Clinton supporters can at least take comfort in the fact that, in this scenario, Trump will never be inaugurated as the country's 45th President. Meanwhile, assuming that the Donald does make it to the White House, should we expect a US administration that moves increasingly toward conspiracy theory and fringe science? (See p5 and next issue.) Or, like some Conservative Christians in the US, should we note that the Rapture Index, measuring events and activities that might presage the approach of the End Times, is currently at an all-time high? (p53) Either way, we may be in for a bumpy ride.



"Of course my sack is empty -
I haven't put you in there yet"

DARK CHRISTMAS

Whatever the future may (or may not) hold, we at Fortean Towers have done our best to end 2016 on a happy note of festive weirdness. Our Man in Dunwich, intrepid pursuer of Suffolk's mystery animals (we eagerly await his forthcoming book on the subject) reports on queer goings-on in the village of Middleton cum Fordley, where frightening men in blackface perform strange, stomping dances while hoisting aloft a small bird and some greenery on a pole. Turn to this issue's Fortean Traveller (p74) for the lowdown on The Cutty Wren, and put Boxing Day night in your diary if you'd like to experience this odd custom for yourself.

Even more terrifying than Suffolk's Molly dancers is the figure of Krampus – a shaggy, horned and bestial-looking figure who accompanies the kindly Saint Nicholas on his Christmas rounds in the towns and villages of Austria and Bavaria. Krampus is more interested in naughty children than nice ones, but his typical bogeyman status belies a fascinating history that mixes elements of Austro-Bavarian pagan folklore with the Catholicism of the 19th century; and what's truly surprising is that his seasonal appearances in *Krampuslauf*, or Krampus Runs, have been spreading steadily in recent years. These days, you won't find Krampus solely in his old Central European stamping grounds, but as far afield as Los Angeles or Whitby. Al Ridenour, who has written a book on the subject, traces Krampus's complex evolution and growing popularity in this month's cover story (pp26). Merry Christmas!

ERRATA

FT345:75-76: Terry Colvin wrote to us to point out that Feodor Machnow's daily consumption of milk, tea and beer was recorded in quarts (see postcard reverse, **FT345:76**), not in pints, as in the main text (**FT345:75**). This would make the giant's true intake of beverages twice as great: Breakfast: One to two quarts of milk or tea. Lunch: One quart of beer. Dinner: One or two quarts of beer. Supper: One quart of tea. Before and after each performance: three pints of OXO.

FT346:61: Tom Large, director of the impressive sci-fi thriller *Arcadia* (which received an enthusiastic noice from Daniel King) emailed to say that while he'd been very pleased to read the review we'd actually mixed up his directorial credit with that of Tod Williams (whose film *Cell* was reviewed by Rev Peter Laws in the same issue). Sorry Tom!

FT347:73: The image of the Devil in a ribeye steak came from El Metichon, a website in Baja California, and was posted on Facebook on 23 March 2016.

DAVID R SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
PAUL SIEVEKING

Why fortean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 78

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Animal passions run high

Monkey sparks mayhem while notorious killer sheep strikes in France

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A tribesman fires a mortar in the Libyan city of Sabha where the monkey incident took place.

MONKEY SPARKS CLASH

At least 20 people were killed and 50 wounded during four days of clashes in mid-November in the southern Libyan city of Sabha, about 410 miles (660km) south of Tripoli. It all kicked off when a monkey belonging to a shopkeeper from the Gaddadfa (or Guedadfa) clan attacked a group of schoolgirls from the Awlad Suleiman clan who were passing by, pulling off one of the girls' headscarves, as well as scratching and biting her. Kinsmen of the girl retaliated by killing three people from the Gaddadfa tribe as well as the monkey. "There was an escalation on the second and third days with the use of tanks, mortars and other heavy weapons," said a local resident. "There are still sporadic clashes and life is completely shut down in the areas where there has been fighting." Casualties may be greater as the death toll is reportedly for the Awlad Suleiman clan only.

Sabha has been periodically plagued by conflict since the 2011 uprising that toppled Muammar Gaddafi splintered the country into warring factions. In the Sabha region, a hub for migrant and arms smuggling in Libya's often neglected south, militia abuses and the deterioration of living conditions have been especially acute. The Gaddadfa and the Awlad Suleiman represent the most powerful armed factions in the region. *[R] 20 Nov; BBC News, 21 Nov 2016.*

NOTORIOUS SHEEP

The body of a 94-year-old Frenchman, with wounds across his face and body, was found by the side of an isolated footpath near the village of Cestas, south of Bordeaux, on 14 November. A notoriously violent sheep was lurking nearby. Criminal forensics experts believe it knocked the man to the ground before trampling him to death with its hooves. "The sheep was a well known troublemaker," said a local resident. "It was always charging at people. Complaints had been made before about the animal, but it was still roaming free." *Sud Ouest*, the local newspaper, confirmed that a number of people had seen the "aggressive sheep", and that a local politician suffered a fracture and heavy bruising after approaching it in the wake of the attack, during a visit to the dead man's family. A police spokesman said the sheep had now been put down. Sheep are thought of as passive creatures, but can actually be extremely aggressive. This can be for a number of reasons, ranging from illness or old age, to fear that they themselves are being attacked. *D.Mail online, 15 Nov 2016.*

A notoriously violent sheep was lurking nearby...

LOOSE LEMUR

Victoria Valledor, 21, had a nasty surprise from a small primate when she left her house in Miami on 18 July 2016. Her younger sister Isabella elaborated: "She was leaving the house when a lemur jumped on her and bit her so she had to call 911. The lemur started chasing her around and then when 911 came it started chasing them around too." The victim's grandmother Celia Rodon ran to get a banana and gave it to the lemur to get its attention, but once again it grabbed hold of Victoria. Miami-Dade Fire Rescue and wildlife officers responded and were able to coax it into a kennel. *CBS Miami, 18 July 2016.*

AVIAN JAILER

Barbara Cox, a retired accountant, was hanging out her washing at home in Brighton, East Sussex, last September, when her day turned pear-shaped. "Two seagulls swooped down on me and one attached itself to my leg," she said. "I was terrified – I'm 80 years old. It came down and grabbed me on the leg with its claws. It pecked me and caused me to bleed. It seemed like they were attacking forever but it must have been a minute or so. I fell back trying to fight them off, then managed to get up crying and saw the blood on my leg and went inside to get it washed and sterilised. It was horrible. I was too scared to go outside of my house for three days." Mrs Cox called the police, but they refused to come. It is believed the seagulls were fiercely protecting the body of a chick at the bottom of her garden. After hiding inside for 72 hours, she ventured out to the Royal Sussex County Hospital after her injured leg became "lumpy". *D.Mirror online, 21 Sept 2016.*

IS IT A MAN? IS IT A GOAT?
This year's Ig Nobel Awards attempt to get back to nature
PAGE 6

NYC OCTOPUS ATTACK
Was a Staten Island ferry taken out by a colossal cephalopod?
PAGE 8

MORE THAN HUMAN
Aliens, artificial intelligence and the power of the imagination
PAGE 25

The Conspirasphere

NOEL ROONEY asks whether the new President Elect, with his penchant for bizarre statements and intemperate tweets, will put the Oval Office at the very centre of the Conspirasphere.

"The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make US manufacturing less competitive."

"...A beautiful child went to have the vaccine, and came back and a week later had a tremendous fever, got very, very sick, now is autistic."

"I want to see his birth certificate. I'm starting to think that he was not born here."

"Obama is the founder of ISIS."

"...You will find out who knocked down the World Trade Center, because they have papers in there that are very secret."

"[George Bush] could have made some mistakes with respect to the actual hit because they knew it was coming."

"You know, the president is thinking of signing an executive order where he wants to take your guns away."

"All I did is point out the fact that on the cover of the National Enquirer there was a picture of him and crazy Lee Harvey Oswald having breakfast."

No, not the words of David Icke (in some of his more conciliatory moments perhaps), or of Alex Jones (when the blood pressure medication has kicked in) – although, given the reported influence of Jones on his campaign, one might be tempted to consider a remote ventriloquial mechanism – but rather quotes, all in the public domain, from the president elect of the United States (PEOTUS sounds vaguely medical and disgusting, doesn't it?).

It might seem, to even a dispassionate observer (I suspect the number of dispassionate observers of the Donald is vanishingly small) that conspiracy theory has finally done rather more than worm its way, on an entertainment level, into the mainstream. The most powerful person in the world (except, obviously, for the Bavarian Illuminati, the Bilderberg puppeteers, the – presumably outraged – denizens of the Deep State, the Grand Satanic Lodge of the Crypto-Zionist Financiers Guild, and 12 bearded persons under a Tibetan hill) appears to be a full citizen of the Conspirasphere.

Of course, Mr Trump is a master of political irony (as the great Slavoj Žižek pointed out in a recent talk, only a master of postmodernist – and post-truth – political irony could have a head of real hair that so closely resembled a wig) and it may be that he only said these things to attract the votes of US citizens not otherwise inclined to listen to candidates (or venture out to vote without the protection of an assault rifle, a supply of dried food and a tin foil hat).

So there is no direct reason to suppose that he is actively contemplating these subjects as he ruminates on his team of advisors, or the general direction of policy over the coming four years. Clearly, a person in charge of their mental faculties (but see the parenthetical comments on A Jones Esq above), who aspires to, and achieves, the most powerful political office in the world, and ultimate discretion over the most powerful military capability in the world, wouldn't be prone to the kind of left-field (but most definitely not left-wing) theorising that is implied by the well-documented comments quoted. I mean, he just wouldn't, would he?

It is at times like this that I yearn for a Voltaire-esque ability to treat those bearded subterranean entities as if they were real, just in case.

http://www.alternet.org/right-wing/58-donald-trump-conspiracy-theories-and-counting-definitive-trump-conspiracy-guide

http://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/wild-donald-trump-quotes/30/

http://www.redstate.com/streiff/2015/10/21/donald-trump-becomes-blatant-911-truther/

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Return of 'dead' fly

Sun, 31 July 2015.

'Daleks answer when we call the council'

Western Gazette, 6 Aug 2015.

Panda faked pregnancy to gain special treatment

D.Telegraph, 31 July 2015.

CASABLANCA MOSQUE STAMPEDE BLAMED ON MOUSE

BBC News, via Irish Independent, 25 July 2015.

Nude Jesus restrained after flats rampage

Sunday Sport, 30 Aug 2015.

SIDELINES...

YOWIE SPOTTED

A bushwalker claims to have spotted the famous Australian manimal known as Yowie in the Darling Downs mountain ranges near Toowoomba. She said it was about 7ft (2m) tall, with "a head like a gorilla and long arms". She was 20ft (6m) away. "I couldn't see it from the waist down because it was walking through the long grass," she said. FT's correspondent Tony Healy said the area is becoming a hotspot for Yowie sightings. *(Queensland) Courier-Times, 7+10 Sept 2016*.

TRAVELLING BOGEYMAN

When a man in dark clothing crawled like a crab under a crash barrier on a motorway in Minsk, the Belarusian capital, scared motorists mistook the jaywalker for chupacabras, the notorious goatsucker – which, we are informed, had been scaring children for years. In Belarus?! Did it teleport from Puerto Rico? *Metro, 16 Sept 2016*.

OFF TO TAKE THE WATERS?

A crab boarded a UK train 40 miles (64km) inland on 18 October. It was seen scuttling down the aisle of a train from Manchester and was ushered off at Cheltenham Spa station in Gloucestershire. *Metro, 18 Oct 2016*.

CARING AND SHARING

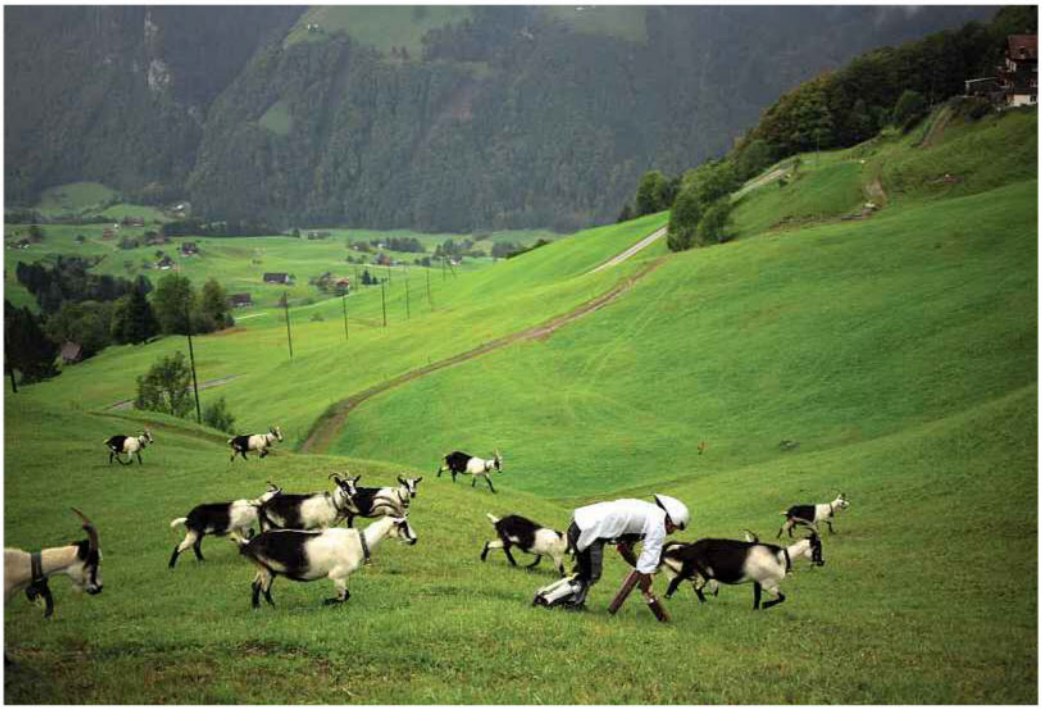
A dossier of daft calls to NHS emergency services in 2015 reveals that 999 and 111 phone lines were plagued by a woman seeking help to remove her earrings, a request for a lift to McDonald's, a man who put too much salt on his dinner, and a 'hit-and-run' involving a squirrel. Also calls about sour milk, blocked noses, paper cuts, broken fingernails and stubbed toes. *D.Telegraph, 26 Dec 2015; Metro, 4 Jan 2016*.

PUTIN NICKED

A man called Vladimir Putin was arrested after screaming at staff in a supermarket in West Palm Beach, Florida. *Metro, 8 Sept 2016*.

Ig Nobel Awards 2016

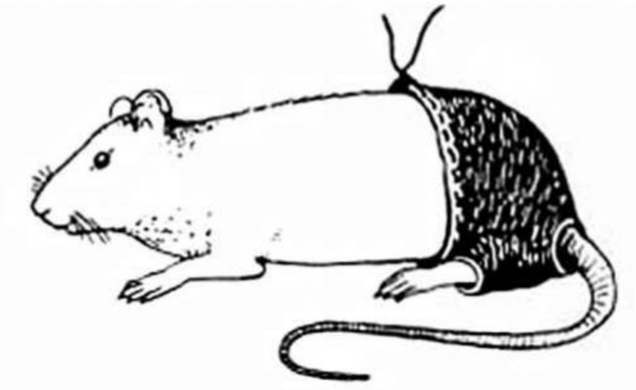
Britain's Goat Man and the rest of this year's winners


TIM BOWDITCH

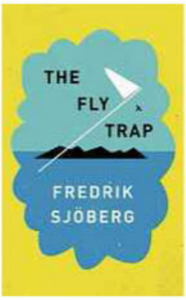
ABOVE: Thomas Thwaites makes like a goat. **BELOW**: What effect did polyester underpants have on the sex lives of rats?

A British man who lived in the Swiss Alps as a goat for three days has won one of this year's Ig Nobel prizes. Thomas Thwaites, 35, had special prosthetic extensions made so he could walk like an animal. The annual award ceremony was held as usual at Harvard's Sanders Theatre. Thwaites shares his biology prize with another Briton, sometime *FT* contributor Charles Foster, who also spent time in the wild trying to experience life from an animal's perspective – as, at different times, a badger, an otter, a deer, a fox, and a bird (see review of his marvellous book, *Being a Beast*, **FT340:57**).

Thwaites concedes his effort was initially an attempt to escape the stress of modern living, but then became a passion. He spent a year researching the idea, and persuaded an expert in prostheses, Dr Glyn Heath at Salford University, to build him a set of goat legs. Fascinating, if a little bizarre on occasion, was Thwaites's verdict on the whole venture. He developed a strong bond with one animal in particular – a 'goat buddy', but also very nearly kicked off a big confrontation at one point. "I was just sort of walking around, you know, chewing grass, and just looked up and then suddenly realised that everyone else had stopped chewing and there was this tension which I hadn't kind of noticed before and then one or two of the goats started tossing their horns around and I think I was about to get in a fight," he said. To find out what happened next, you'll have to read his book, *GoatMan; How I Took a Holiday from Being Human* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2016).



The American science humour magazine *The Annals of Improbable Research* is the inspiration behind the Ig Nobels, which are now in their 26th year. The ceremony on 22 September was as chaotic as ever, with audience members throwing the obligatory paper planes while real Nobel laureates attempted to hand out the prizes – which included 10-trillion dollar bills from Zimbabwe. Nearly all of the science gets published in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals, but it is unlikely that Volkswagen will appreciate the point or humour of the chemistry prize, given to the company for the way it cheated emissions tests.



The reproduction prize was won by the late Egyptian scientist Ahmed Shafik, for fitting rats with a variety of tiny underpants, and testing the effects on their sex life of wearing polyester, cotton, polyester/cotton mix, or wool. The results, published in *European Urology*, revealed that those rodents wearing polyester were less sexually active, possibly due to static electricity.

A three-volume work about the pleasures of collecting flies

Physics went to the Hungarian Gabor Horvath (with colleagues from Spain, Sweden and Switzerland) for discovering why white horses are the most horsefly-proof, and why dragonflies are fatally attracted to black tombstones. Medicine was won by a group of German scientists for discovering that if you have an itch on the left side of your body you can relieve it by looking into a mirror and scratching the right side of your body (and vice versa). Psychology went to scientists from five countries, who asked 1,000 liars how often they lie, and then decided whether or not to believe those answers. ("From Junior to Senior Pinocchio: A Cross-Sectional Lifespan Investigation of Deception", by Evelyne Debey, Maarten De Schryver, Gordon D Logan, Kristina Suchotzki, and Bruno Verschuere, *Acta Psychologica*, vol.160, 2015, pp.58-68.) The economics prize was won by Mark Avis and colleagues, for assessing the perceived personalities of rocks, from a sales and marketing perspective.

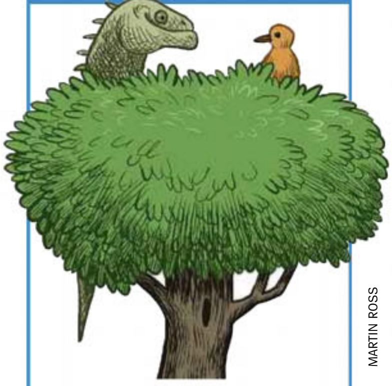
"On the Reception and Detection of Pseudo-Profound Bullshit" by Gordon Pennycook and others (*Judgment and Decision Making*, vol.10, no.6, Nov 2015, pp.549–563) carried off the peace prize. The literature award went to the Swedish author Fredrik Sjöberg, for *En Flugsamlares Vag* (*The Path of a Fly Collector*), his three-volume autobiographical work about the pleasures of collecting flies that are dead, and flies that are not yet dead. Volume one, *The Fly Trap*, is the first to be published in English (Pantheon Books, 2015). Finally, the perception prize was awarded to two Japanese scientists for investigating whether things look different when you bend over and view them between your legs. ("Perceived size and Perceived Distance of Targets Viewed From Between the Legs: Evidence for Proprioceptive Theory", by Atsuki Higashiyama and Kohei Adachi, *Vision Research*, vol.46, no.23, Nov 2006, pp.3961–76.)

BBC News, <i> 23 Sept; D.Telegraph, D.Mirror, 24 Sept 2016. For last year's Ig Nobel winners, see **FT321:9**.

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Professor Atsuki Higashiyama of Ritsumeikan University poses with students to show how objects look different when one bends over and views them through one's legs.

SIDELINES...


MARTIN ROSS

ARBORIAL REPTILE

A pet iguana made its home up a tree and refused to come down for three months except occasionally to sunbathe. The reptile's owner, Mike Hamilton of Lowestoft in Suffolk, said his pet was "enjoying himself" too much to come down. *D.Telegraph, 1 Sept 2016*.

PRODIGY

Two-year-old Rakshitha Kumar from Edinburgh can recite the capital cities of 196 countries in alphabetical order, continent by continent. She learned the main capitals during an 11-hour flight from India, when her parents tried to keep her occupied. She learned so quickly that they used an app to teach her a much longer list, which she memorised in three months. *D.Mirror, 2 Aug 2016*.

HYENA IN SOMERSET

On 16 August, Stuart Price encountered what he described as a hyena in a wooded area of the Gordano Valley Nature Reserve in North Somerset. The police told him they had received several other hyena reports. There were two further sightings on the night of 16/17 August. Most witnesses heard a high-pitched 'laugh' before seeing the creature. *Western Daily Press, 19+20 Aug 2016.*

VIKING FIND

A group of geese hunters in Iceland failed to spot a single bird, but found a perfectly preserved, 1,000-year-old Viking sword "just lying on the ground" in Skaftárhreppur. It might have been washed up after flooding last year. *Metro, 8 Sept 2016*.

SIDELINES...

STRAY WALLABIES

On 15 July, the TransPennine Express from Manchester to Middlesbrough was 14 minutes late because of a wallaby on the line. It had reportedly escaped from a farm in Slaithwaite, West Yorkshire. A month later, Brian Lockyer was driving to work when a wallaby jumped out of a hedge in a country lane near Tetsworth, Oxfordshire. It looked into the headlights and then hopped by the side of the car. *Middlesbrough Gazette, 16 July; D.Mail, Metro, 23 Aug 2016*.

THE WOMAN HAS GUTS

Customs officers at Graz airport in Austria discovered human entrails in the bag of a Moroccan traveller. They had been tightly wrapped and placed in two receptacles. The unnamed woman explained that her deceased husband, a Moroccan born in 1976, had been poisoned and she wishes to have a toxicology analysis of his tissue carried out. Police were not asked to intervene. *BBC News, 26 Sept; D.Telegraph, 27 Sept 2016*.

BADGER EXCAVATION

Badgers are wreaking havoc in a mediæval churchyard by unearthing human bones. Graves at the 13th century All Saints Church in Loughborough, Leicestershire, have been disturbed. Parishioners have been reminded that it is illegal to kill badgers or destroy a sett, so churchwardens are reburying stray bones while saying prayers. *D.Mail, D.Telegraph, 14 Sept 2016*.

MARTIN ROSS

FOR THOSE IN PERIL

SEA MONSTERS VERSUS U-BOATS AND THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY

SCOTTISH POWER

ABOVE: *HMS Coreopsis* sank UB-85 off the west coast of Scotland in 1918. **BELOW:** A sonar image of the sunken submarine.

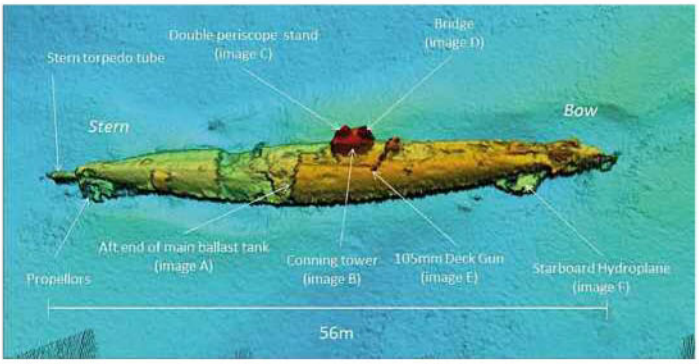
A £1 billion venture by Scottish Power and the National Grid to lay a subsea power cable big enough to connect Scotland and England has led to the discovery of the wreck of a German U-boat off the Stranraer coast in south-west Scotland, 104m (340ft) down. Experts believe it may be the remains of UB-85, which according to salty legend was attacked by an enormous sea monster towards the end of World War I. The submarine was scuttled by British patrol boat *HMS Coreopsis* after it was caught on the surface of the water on 30 April 1918. Surprisingly, its German crew surrendered without resistance.

According to the legend, the ship's commander Captain Günther Krech (right) related that they had been on the surface of the water while they recharged their batteries at night when a "strange beast" rose out of the deep. He described a monster with "large eyes, set in a horny sort of skull", adding: "It had a small head, but with teeth that could be seen glistening in the moonlight." Startled, his men began firing at the monster, which refused to let go of the forward gun mount. As the vessel began to list, the captain ordered his men to continue the attack until the monster finally slipped back under the water. Shaken but unharmed, the crew quickly realised the boat was badly damaged and unable to submerge. "That is why you were able to catch us on the surface," the captain is said to have told the British.

Dr Innes McCartney, a historian, nautical archæologist and honorary research fellow at Bournemouth University, has been examining the wreck, which is about 45m (148ft) long and 120m (394ft) away from the centre of the planned cable route, and believes it could be the fabled UB-85. "In the waters of the Irish Sea there are at least 12 British and German submarines known to have sunk," he said. "The features of this particular wreck, which is largely intact, confirm it as a UBIII-Class submarine, of which we know of two which were lost in the area – the more famous UB-85 and its sister boat UB-82," he said. "While I can conclude that this wreck is likely to be one or the other, they would be practically impossible to tell apart, aside from the numbers painted on them in service, now obviously long gone. Unless a diver can find a shipyard stamp, we cannot definitively say – but yes, we are certainly closer to solving the so-called mystery of UB-85 and the reason behind its sinking – whether common mechanical failure or something that is less easily explained."

According to legend, UB-85 was attacked by a sea monster

Dr McCartney doubts the sea monster yarn, suspecting it dates back not to WWI but to a club armchair and too much pink gin in the 1920s. "You've got to remember that after the war the records were sealed, but there were all these people with some connection to British intelligence who yearned to boast of mighty deeds at sea but couldn't tell the true stories," he said, offering his own scenario: "The real sea monster was the U-boat, here trying to sink ships. The submarine was caught on the surface at night, recharging its batteries. It saw the patrol ship coming and attempted to do a crash dive to get away. Once it was under water, it rapidly started flooding from above so they had no option but to blow all the compressed air they had, bring



SCOTTISH POWER

the submarine to the surface at which point all they could do was surrender.”

However, Gary Campbell, keeper of the Official Sightings Register of the Loch Ness Monster – there have allegedly been six sightings so far in 2016, most recently in August – is less sceptical (as one might expect). “The WWI report from the captain of the British ship *HMS Hilary* a year earlier makes it clear that seafarers were well aware of large sea ‘monsters’ that could harm their ships,” he said. “It is entirely feasible that some large sea creature disabled the submarine. History has shown that there have been consistent reports of large ‘monsters’ not just in lakes and lochs like Loch Ness but out in open waters as well. For many years the giant squid was known as the fearsome Kraken and, given the size of the oceans, it wouldn’t be a surprise if many large species were still to be discovered. The area of sea where the attack took place has a history of sea monster sightings – they have ranged from the north coast of Wales to Liverpool Bay. What the German captain said could well be true. It’s great to see how Nessie’s saltwater cousin clearly got involved in helping with the war effort – she even managed to do the damage without anyone being killed.” *BBC News, D.Telegraph online, D.Mail online, 19 Oct; Guardian online, 20 Oct 2016.*

● A cast-bronze monument for the victims of the sinking of a steam ferry recently appeared in Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan, near other sombre memorials to soldiers, sailors and mariners lost at sea or on the battlefield. There was, however, no such ferry disaster: artist Joseph Reginella made the whole thing up. The 250lb (113kg) monument, which depicts a Staten Island ferry, the *Cornelius G Kolff*, being dragged under the waves by a giant octopus, is part of a hoax that includes a sophisticated website, a documentary, fabricated newspaper articles and glossy fliers directing tourists to a phantom Staten Island Ferry Disaster Memorial Museum, across the harbour, with its supposed collection of wreckage with “strange suction-cup-shaped marks”.

Reginella said the idea came to him while he was taking his 11-year-old nephew on the ferry between Manhattan and Staten Island. “He was asking me all kinds of crazy questions, like if the waters were shark-infested,” he said. “I said ‘No, but you know what did happen in the 60s? One of these boats got pulled down by a giant octopus.’ The story just rolled off the top of my head,” he said, and it evolved to become “a multimedia art project and social experience – not maliciously – about how gullible people are”.

Reginella, who usually creates artworks for store windows and amusement parks, said his ferry monument never stayed in one spot for more than two days “because the city will come and take it away”. It takes two people to break the piece down and move it. “It’s definitely an experience when you see people who don’t know about it,” Reginella said. “They get this strange look on their face, they stare out at the water and walk away. I sit close by with a fishing pole and fish. I eavesdrop on the conversations.” Sometimes, he said, when he overhears people saying, “How come nobody has ever heard of this?” he’ll interject, offering that the disaster happened on 22 November 1963, a day when the news was dominated by the Kennedy assassination.

Melanie Giuliano, who produced a mock documentary for Reginella’s website, used her father in the role of a maritime expert and a neighbour as an eyewitness. A colleague of Reginella’s wife served as the narrator. “I thought it was an insane idea but I thought it was hilarious,” said Giuliano. One thing about the preposterous story is real. There really was a *Cornelius G Kolff* ferry, which carried passengers for 36 years before becoming a floating dorm for inmates at the Rikers Island prison. It was sold for scrap in 2003. *[AP] 1 Oct 2016; www.sioctopusdisaster.com/*

FACEBOOK

ABOVE: Flowers left at the monument to the *Cornelius G Kolff* – sunk by a giant octopus (or not).

SIDELINES...

HARSH UP NORTH

Four Norwegians are facing a fine or up to four months in jail for hurling rocks over the border into Russia, even though the rocks caused no damage. The group were detained in Norway’s northern province of Finnmark. *D.Telegraph, 16 Aug 2016*.

CAPONE CAGED

A notorious nuisance called Al Capone has been jailed for 121 days. Alexandra Capone, 41, was evicted from her house in Worthing, West Sussex, after a decade of terrorising her neighbours; she then spat at a nurse and assaulted two men, stamping on one of their mobile phones. *Sun, 18 Oct 2016*.

HEY PESTO

When a brown bag was seen at a bus stop in Borough High Street, south London, on 21 August, police carried out a controlled explosion. Adam Smith later tweeted: “Standing at the bus stop chuckling to myself as I keep seeing more evidence of the sandwich explosion. There is pesto on the first floor windows.” *southwarknews.co.uk, 25 Aug 2016.*

ZOO FEAST

Hungry Venezuelans broke into Caricuao Zoo in Caracas at night and pulled a black stallion from its stall, led it to a secluded spot and butchered it for food. Zookeepers arriving for duty the next morning found only its head and ribs left behind in a pile. Vietnamese pigs and sheep were reportedly stolen from the same zoo a few weeks earlier. *D.Telegraph, 19 Aug 2016*.

BURNING ISSUE

On 5 July a pile of horse manure in Throop, upstate New York, caught fire, prompting multiple complaints to environmental authorities about the smell and smoke. Stable owners had been storing the manure in large piles that frequently spontaneously combusted in the excessive heat and dry conditions. *[AP] 28 July 2016.*

SIDELINES...

PIONEER OSSIFRAGE

In mid-May, a spectacular bearded vulture, believed to be the first recorded in the UK, was spotted soaring over the Severn estuary and over Dartmoor in Devon, 100 miles away. The vulture is also known as the lammergeier or ossifrage. Though a sizeable bird, it was thought to be a juvenile. *Guardian, 17 May 2016*.

BUZZ ALERT

A buzzing noise in a rubbish bin set off a bomb alert in the Italian city of Modena. Officials set up a 200m cordon; three hours later, after poking the object with a shovel, bomb disposal experts sounded the all-clear. It turned out to be a sex toy. *D.Telegraph, 19 Mar 2016*.

BATTLING BEAVER

Betsy Bent, 67, was paddle-boarding on Beaver Lake, North Carolina, on 8 July when a beaver knocked her board over from underneath the water, then latched on to her leg and wouldn't let go. A fisherman knocked the beaver off her twice, but it attacked again before letting her go. Bent needed stitches and rabies shots. *[AP] 11 July 2016*.

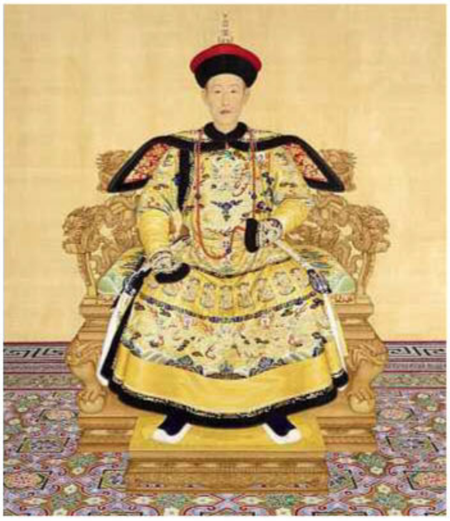
WATERMELON STUNT

A man was taken to hospital with facial injuries in China after he and a friend caused a watermelon to explode last July by wrapping 728 elastic bands around it. They were inspired by a viral video from April, when two Americans managed to get 686 rubber bands around the fruit before it burst. *D.Mirror online, 18 July 2016*.

MARTIN ROSS

Outrageous scams

'Immortal' Chinese emperor and other unlikely con-artists



• A Chinese businesswoman was duped into giving more than £5 million to a conman claiming to be Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799). The Qing dynasty emperor, who ruled from 1735 to 1796, is best known in the West for receiving an enormous British trade delegation led by the Irishman George Macartney. Qianlong (pictured right) was renowned for his pursuit of the elixir of eternal life, and Liu Qianzhen managed to persuade Zheng Xuejue that he had, in fact, found it, and was alive and well more than two centuries later. Last August, Mr Liu was on trial in Shenzhen with his alleged accomplice, Wan Jianmin, who claimed to be a billionaire banker. Their eventual sentences don't seem to have been publicised.

Mrs Zheng met Mr Wan in 2012 to discuss her plan to establish a rural bank. Despite possessing only a high school diploma, he claimed to control a Canadian bank fund of more than $300 billion and played his trump card by introducing the supposedly immortal Mr Liu. They asked Mrs Zheng for £250,000 to help the 'Emperor' to unfreeze his royal assets, allegedly still intact since the fall of his dynasty in 1911. (This will sound eerily familiar to victims of Nigerian email scams.) Two years later they convinced her to hand over another £5 million, which they said would be used to buy financial derivatives and a technology company – along with the purchase of jade cabbage sculptures. Instead they spent the money on houses, cars and premium medicines.

Mr Wan, 55, told the victim that he was a student of the billionaire investor George Soros and a Vietnam War veteran (China also fought and lost a war with Vietnam in 1979). He also claimed to be a former tax bureau chief in Jingdezhen and good friends with Communist Party leaders in Beijing. At some point, Mrs Zheng's husband became suspicious – after all, it was his money she was giving away – and started recording conversations with the pair. According to one transcript, she asked: "How many hundred years old are you?" *Shenzhen Daily, 26 Aug; Irish Times, 27 Aug; (London) Times, 29 Aug 2016.*

• A British Internet consultant blew £472,000 on two New York 'psychics' who promised to re-unite him with his ex-lover. Niall Rice, 33, claimed he was conned into making 51 separate payments to Priscilla Kelly Delmaro, 26, who worked under the name Christina. They included £59,000 to build an 80-mile (130km) "bridge of gold to another dimension" to trick an evil spirit that was haunting his estranged former girlfriend. Other payments were £36,850 to rid him of an evil spirit, £26,325 for a fake funeral to make evil spirits think he was dead, £19,740 for a "time machine" in the form of gold Rolex watch, "to cleanse his past", and £52,650 for a 90-mile (145km) bridge, when the shorter bridge failed.

Shortly after paying for the golden bridge, Rice logged onto the Facebook page of his ex-girlfriend, called Michelle, and found she had died of a drug overdose. Delmaro then claimed she could help him get back a reincarnated Michelle. He moved to California, but said Delmaro emailed him repeatedly about visions she had of a new Michelle. After disastrously dating a woman he was told was her, he hired a private investigator who tracked down Delmaro. In May 2015 Rice, now broke, pressed charges and Delmaro was accused of grand larceny; but he despaired of reclaiming any money after learning that the Manhattan district attorney's office intended to allow Delmaro to plead guilty in exchange for a year in jail.

Rice, who had made a fortune from IT, moved from London to the US in 2013 and now lives in Los Angeles. He met Michelle in an Arizona rehab clinic where he was being treated for acute anxiety, and moved to New York after their relationship ended. He first visited another 'psychic' called Brandy Mitchel, who was not charged. He made 11 payments to her, including £26,367 for a Tiffany's diamond ring to "ward off evil spirits". He lost faith in her after a meeting with Michelle in California went badly and he turned to Delmaro. "I just got sucked in," he said. "It's embarrassing now." *D.Mail, Metro, 17 Nov; (Queensland) Courier Mail, 19 Nov 2016.*

• Two fake clairvoyants copied a trick from the mediæval Church by duping a woman into paying £115,000 to get her frail father a place in Heaven. Lucia Borrelli, 51, and Paola Catanzaro, 40, were paid £4,600 a month for almost two years. The pair, on trial in Bari, Italy, allegedly told the woman they needed to pay for special crucifixes and ritual blessings. *Metro, 21 Jan 2016.*

MEGALITHOMANIA

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MEGALITHS & GIANTS SARDINIA TOUR
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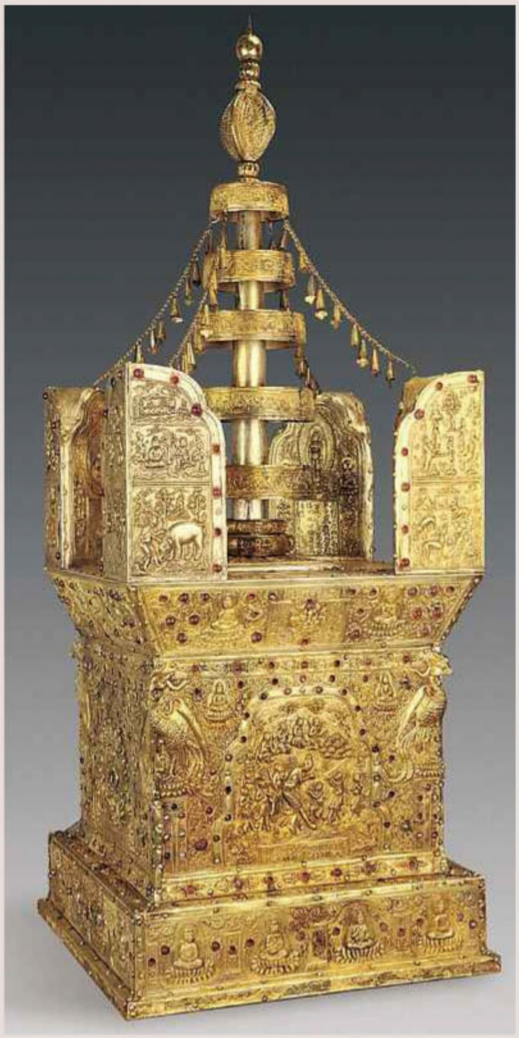
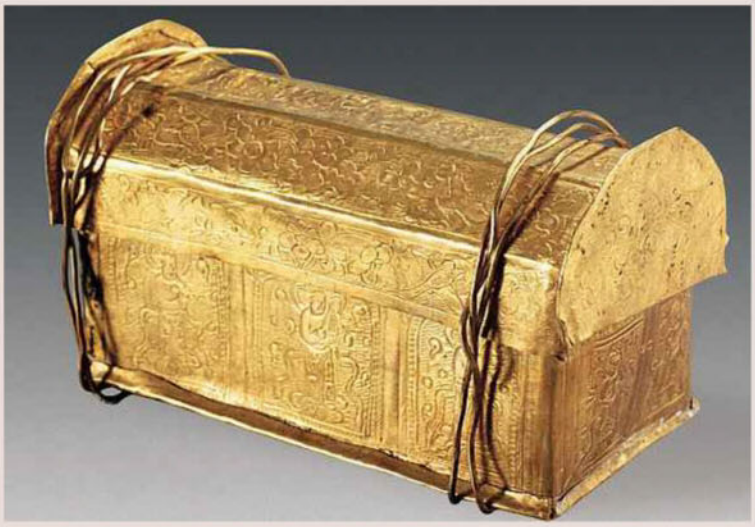
MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING reports on a possible relic of the Buddha unearthed in China, a burial that suggests cannabis use was popular in the ancient East and evidence of Roman London's earliest Chinese inhabitants.





CHINESE CULTURAL RELICS

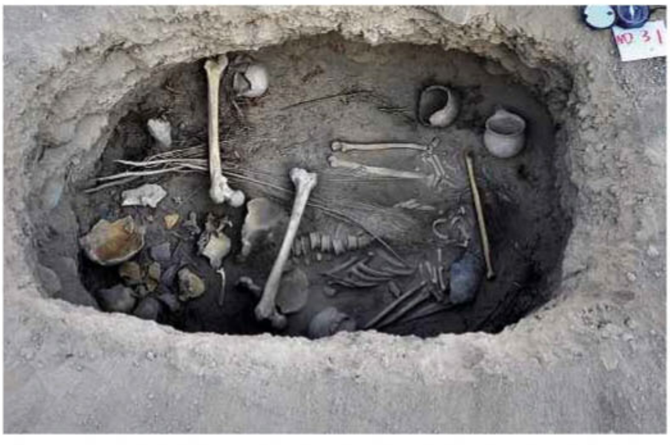
ABOVE: The stupa, made of sandalwood, silver and gold and studded with crystal, glass, agate and lapiz lazuli. The stupa was found inside an iron box, itself within a stone chest.
TOP RIGHT: Inside the stupa was this gold casket containing a parietal bone claimed to be a relic of the Buddha.

A BIT OF BUDDHA?

During excavations from 2007 to 2010, archæologists discovered what is claimed to be a relic of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, in a crypt beneath the Grand Bao'en (Buddhist) Temple in Nanjing, China. A parietal (skull) bone, that according to an inscription belonged to the Buddha himself, was found in a gold casket along with three crystal bottles and a silver box, all of which contained the remains of other Buddhist saints. The casket was inside the model of a stupa – measuring 117cm (3ft 10in) by 45cm (1ft 6in) – made of sandalwood, silver and gold, studded with crystal, glass, agate and lapis lazuli. The stupa was inside an iron box, itself within a stone chest. Engraved on the outside of the stupa are several images of the Buddha, along with scenes depicting stories from his life, from birth to parinirvana. Inscriptions engraved on the stone chest state that it was constructed during the reign of Emperor Zhenzong (AD 997-1022), during the Song Dynasty, and quotes a certain Deming, who calls himself "the Master of Perfect Enlightenment, Abbot of Chengtian Monastery [and] the Holder of the Purple Robe", who relates that after the Buddha "was cremated near the Hirannavati River" in India, Emperor Ashoka (268-232 BC) decided to preserve his remains, which he "divided into a total of 84,000 shares. Our land of China received 19 of them." Deming says the parietal bone was kept in a temple that was destroyed in about the seventh century during a series of wars, but was rebuilt by Emperor Zhenzong, and the relics were solemnly interred on 21 July 1011. The bone and other relics have been reinterred in Qixia Temple, a Buddhist temple still in use. The discovery is described in the journal *Chinese Cultural Relics*. *Live Science, 30 June 2016.*

CANNABIS SHROUD

In a report in the journal *Economic Botany*, archæologist Hongen Jiang and his colleagues describe the burial of a 35-year-old man with Caucasian features in the Turpan Basin, northwest China. Radiocarbon dating indicates that the burial occurred approximately 2,400 to 2,800 years ago. The man had been laid out on a wooden bed with a reed pillow beneath his head. Thirteen cannabis plants, each up to almost 3ft (90cm) long, were placed diagonally across his chest, with the roots beneath his pelvis and the tops of the plants extending alongside the left side of his face. While nearly all of the flowering heads of the 13 female plants had been cut off before they were placed on the body, a few that remained were nearly ripe and contained some immature fruit. The heads were covered with glandular trichomes containing psychoactive cannabinoids such as THC.



Of course, cannabis has long been valued not only for its psychoactive properties, but also for its durable hemp fibres ideal for weaving, as well as for its nutritious seeds. However, no hemp textiles have been found in Turpan burials, and the seeds of the plants are too small to serve as a practical food source. This discovery adds to a growing collection of archæological evidence showing that cannabis consumption was "very popular" across the Eurasian steppe thousands of years ago, according to Jiang (see **FT346:14**). West of Turpan, cannabis seeds have also been found in first millennium BC Scythian burials in southern Siberia, including one of a woman who possibly died of breast cancer. Archæologists suspect she may have been using cannabis in part to ease her symptoms. However, this is the first time ever that archaeologists have recovered complete cannabis plants, as well as the first incidence of their use as a 'shroud'. The researchers suspect that the herb was grown and harvested for its psychoactive resin, which may have been inhaled as a sort of incense or consumed in a beverage for ritual or medicinal purposes.

The burial is one of 240 graves excavated at the Jiayi cemetery in Turpan, and is associated with the Subeixi culture (also known as the Gushi Kingdom) that occupied the area between roughly 3,000 to 2,000 years ago. At the time, Turpan's desert oasis was an important stop on the Silk Road. Cannabis plant parts have been found in a few other Turpan burials, most notably in a contemporaneous burial in nearby Yanghai cemetery discovered nearly a decade ago, which contained close to two pounds of cannabis seeds and powdered leaves. *National Geographic, 4 Oct 2016.*

COSMOPOLITAN LONDINIUM

After the excavation of a cemetery in Southwark, south London, dating from the second to the fourth century AD, new skull analysis techniques identified four people who were ethnically African – and astonishingly, two who were ethnically Chinese. Dr Rebecca Redfern, curator of human osteology at the Museum of London, said the find was "the first time in Roman Britain we've identified people with Asian ancestry" and it was "absolutely phenomenal". Isotope analysis, described in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*, showed that the east Asians were not born in Britain. Only one other east Asian skeleton has ever been found in the Roman empire, and that was in Italy. *Times, BBC News, 23 Sept 2016.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

206: CHEESED OFF

"He sticks in one room and eats rat trap cheese" – Theodore Dreiser on Fort (Jim Steinmeyer, Charles Fort: *The Man Who Invented the Supernatural*, p269)

(If this column isn't Gouda enough, go to Paul Kindstedt's *Cheese & Culture,* 2012; also Laura Martinez, *The Everything Cheese Book,* 2007)

Greek mythology credited Aristæus with inventing both apiculture and cheesemaking – certainly knew his A's, Bees, and C(heese)'s. More likely that one day a farmer milking his cows stumbled on it – if it's not one thing, it's the udder. A pity Pindar didn't compose a quasi-Keatsian *Ode On A Grecian Churn.* Egypt looks to be the earliest dairy culture. From c.3000 BC, tomb paintings depict cheesemaking, with jars containing it placed therein.

Cheese and religion were often paired. The Cretans dedicated their 'female' cheeses at certain festivals (Athenæus, bk14 para658a), whilst Spartan boys were flogged as part of their ritual for stealing cheeses from the altar of Artemis Orthia (Xenophon, *Spartan Constitution*, bk2 ch9). Athenæus (*passim*) and Pliny (*Natural History*, bk11 ch97 paras 240-2) catalogue a huge variety. As General de Gaulle plaintively asked: "How can you govern a country that has 246 cheeses?" Nestor in Homer's *Iliad* used to drink Pramnian wine sprinkled with goats' cheese (*a feta accompli*?). When grated onto Machaon's wounds, they were instantly healed (*Iliad*, bk11 v638)

Talking of these warriors, since Latin for cheese is *Caseus,* have we here the original Caseus Belly?

Machaon's cure has been modernly outdone by three-year-old Fields Taylor, mute from birth, until eating cream cheese opened her vocal cords (*Huffington Post*, 22 July 2013). Since the child is from Melton Mowbray, I'd have expected a miraculous pork pie rather than a dairy product.

Almost a case of Thus Spake Zarathustra. He was equally cheesy. Pliny (*NH*, bk11 ch97 para42) says he subsisted in the desert for 20 years on a wondrous cheese that never aged. Elsewhere (*NH*, bk30 ch2 paras3-4), Pliny credits him with inventing magic and composing two million lines of poetry. You have to laugh – something Zoroaster did (*NH*, bk7 ch16 para72; Augustine, *City of God*, bk21 ch14) the moment he was born.

I hear you asking: What about the Moon being made of green cheese? Credit that piece of (g)astro-wisdom to *The Proverbs of John Heywood* (1546). Another link here with the gelastic Zoroaster. Sentenced to death for plotting against Archbishop Cranmer, Heywood walked to the gallows but was "saved by his mirth", according to Sir John Harington, himself worth a passing mention as the inventor of the flush toilet (Step Back, Thomas Crapper) dubbed the Ajax, hence our slang term 'Jakes'.

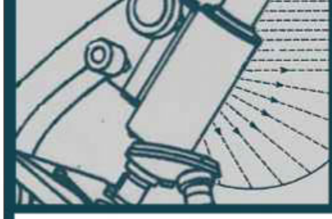
Pliny (*NH,* bk11 ch97 para241) mentions the Luni cheese from the border between Liguria and Tuscany that weighed one thousand pounds – a bit big for the cheese-rollers of Cooper's Hill, Gloucestershire, and for their Canadian equivalents at Whistler, British Columbia.

But, outdone by the 1,235 pounder one from Cheshire presented to Thomas Jefferson; cf. Candace Fleming, *A Big Cheese for the White House: The True Tale of a tremendous Cheddar* (1999). And equalled by the 1,000lb monster Cheddar wheel presented in 1869 by Green's of Glastonbury to Queen Victoria – don't know if she was more bemused than amused by this opportunity for a giant Cheddar gorge.

In Apuleius's novel *Metamorphoses* (aka *The Golden Ass* – British sense, not American), bk1 ch4, the narrator almost chokes to death on some cheese. This may reflect the actual fate of contemporary Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 138-61) who (according to the *Augustan History*'s biography of him, ch12 paras4-5) died from over-indulging in Alpine cheese, thus causing vomiting and a fatal fever. According to the Alpine Cheeses website, they come in many varieties and large sizes – in Pius's case a big wheel for a Big Wheel. With memories of Claudius and his lethal mushrooms, it is always possible that somebody poisoned the cheese, but if so, everybody kept their Von Trapp shut. Or maybe the usually frugal emperor washed it down with water instead of wine, which is supposed to make the cheese congest dangerously in the stomach.

Whatever the cause, the virtuous Pius was sorely missed – His absence made all hearts grow Fondue [Oh please! – Ed].

"I think we're all bugs and mice, and are only different expressions of an all-inclusive cheese" – Fort, *Books*, p4


MATT PATTINSON

ALIEN MEGASTRUCTURES

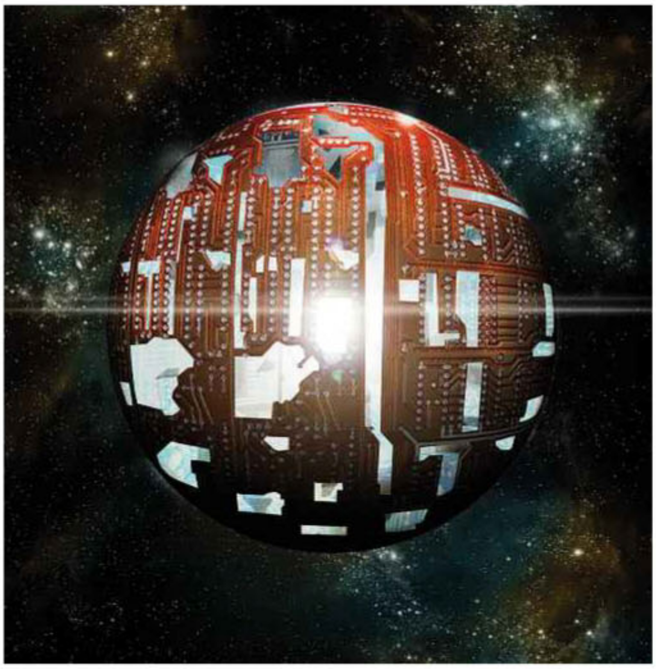
The Twittersphere has been buzzing with talk of intelligent ET life and Tabby's star continues to puzzle astronomers – but, asks **DAVID HAMBLING**, are aliens responsible?

The Universe is a strange place indeed. Ever since Galileo observed Saturn in 1610 and noted that its appearance changed oddly over time, with 'ears' that came and went, astronomers have struggled to make sense of their observations. The latest discovery has sent the phrase 'alien megastructure' echoing through the Twittersphere, with suggestions that we may just have found the first sign of intelligent extraterrestrial life – but it may be something much weirder than that.

In 1960, the physicist Freeman Dyson wrote a speculative paper on "The Search for Artificial Stellar Sources of Infrared Radiation", in which he discussed how an advanced civilisation might be visible from Earth. Dyson suggested that the logical endpoint of the drive to capture as much energy as possible from a sun would be for engineers to completely enclose it in a hollow sphere. Once the builders had completed it, the only light visible from their star would be the muted infra-red glow of radiated heat.

Needless to say, this would be engineering on a scale that is unthinkable with our current Earth-bound technology. Building an escalator to the Moon would be child's play by comparison. But Dyson reasoned that such a sphere might be possible for a sufficiently advanced race with a few million years to spare. Such a structure, which became known as a Dyson sphere, would be a sure sign of an advanced alien race. Looking for Dyson spheres might be easier than the frustrating task of sifting through cosmic radio signals [see **FT346:16**].

KIC 8462852 is an F-type star somewhat larger and hotter than our own sun. It is around 1,500 light-years away in the direction of Cygnus. It is sometimes called Tabby's Star after astronomer Dr Tabetha Boyajian, manager of the Planet Hunters project which provides data from the Kepler telescope for 'citizen astronomers' to analyse. Some of these enthusiasts noted unusual fluctuations in the brightness of Tabby's Star, and in 2015 Boyajian was lead author of a paper describing the phenomenon.


MARC WARD / STOCKTREK IMAGES

> **There might be something much larger than a planet involved**

Planets orbiting distant stars may be spotted by the slight dimming produced when one passes in front of the star, which is why the Planet Hunters were interested in such fluctuations. But the dimming of Tabby's star was not the usual, regular diminution of a few per cent at regular intervals. Instead it was highly irregular, with something blocking as much as 20 per cent of the star's light. This might indicate that there was something much larger than a planet involved, and that, unlike most astronomical objects, it was not following a simple orbit. Jason Wright and colleagues at Pennsylvania State University published a paper suggesting that the dimming might be the shadow of a part-completed Dyson Sphere, a Dyson Swarm – a collection of vast solar-power satellites – or some other colossal alien construction.

More conventional alternatives were also proposed. During the early years of the life of a solar system, the sun is surrounded by a ring of stellar debris and other material in the process of coalescing to form planets. If Tabby's star is younger than initially thought, it might also have a debris field. This theory was checked by spectroscopic study of the system using the NASA Infrared Telescope Facility, looking for the tell-tale infra-red signature of such material. It found nothing.

Another theory was that the dimming was caused by a swarm of comets on a highly eccentric orbit at a great distance from Tabby's Star. This was a more difficult hypothesis to check.

Bradley Schaefer of Louisiana State University decided to investigate further. The initial research findings were based on Harvard University's archive of digitised photographic plates taken by astronomers dating back to 1889. Schaefer examined the original photographic plates and discovered that there was also a longer-term dimming process.

Schaefer calculated that the observed dimming would have required over 600,000 comets, each of them over 200km (124 miles) across, passing directly in front of the star. Those numbers are way out of line with the size and number of comets previously observed, effectively sounding a death knell for the comet theory.

"The comet-family idea was reasonably put forth as the best of the proposals," said Schaefer in May. "But now we have a refutation of the idea, and indeed, of all published ideas."

In September, researchers from the US Naval Observatory found that some of the dimmings of Tabby's star were accompanied by a slight change in the direction of the light. This could be explained by another star along the line of sight, one that is also dimmed. This would make sense if there were a field of interstellar debris, far from Tabby's star, which is occluding both. The problem with this theory is that such debris is effectively invisible and much harder to prove or disprove. It is a theoretical entity proposed to explain the observations, but which has no additional, checkable properties beyond the shadow it casts. Further analysis of the data from NASA's Kepler telescope has uncovered a more complex pattern than first noted, with a combination of slow long-term dimming and sudden rapid changes. There is no current theory to explain the kind of debris that might cause this pattern.

Meanwhile other telescopes are being turned on Tabby's Star. Jason Wright, originator of the megastructure theory, plans a survey in late 2016 with West Virginia's Green Bank Telescope. Tabby Boyajian herself launched a crowdfunding campaign and has raised enough to use the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network for a year.

Perhaps new observations will clear up the mystery. It was only after Galileo's death that better telescopes revealed the existence of Saturn's rings, the real cause of those baffling intermittent 'ears' around the planet which he had noted. The mystery of Tabby's Star may also take some time to resolve. No doubt further theories will be put forward in the meantime, and aliens will always be just a remote possibility… until we find them.

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ALAN MURDIE examines the remarkable Mrs Leonora Piper, trance medium par excellence

THE CASE OF MRS PIPER

As the Northern Hemisphere enters into the darkness of winter, one may reflect how for millennia different European cultures have associated the last quarter of the year with manifestations from the dead. For many centuries, the idea that the spirits of the dead returned and mingled once again with the living was treated as a seasonal certainty. In Britain and North America, modern Hallowe'en antics have usurped the older Catholic traditions of All Saints and All Souls over 1-2 November, constituting a faint whisper of these ancient notions, also apparent in the association of ghosts with Christmas.

Doubtless within the materialist culture of the 21st century West, the endless rounds of broadcast and wifi-generated amusements available provide a permanent distraction from such themes, with the result that only a relatively small section of the Western populace ever takes any time to think seriously about the fate of the dead, or even of their own ultimate destinations – if anywhere – when earthly life ends. As Andrew Martin puts it in *Ghoul Britannia* (2009): "I suspect that most of us regard the whole business of contacting the dead as rather old hat; a hobby of yesteryear, like hopscotch or going to the beach with a metal detector".

Such contemporary lack of interest in personal survival is reinforced intellectually by mainstream psychology, as currently taught and practised. Modern psychology is shaped by a materialist philosophy that has rejected the idea of the soul (there were never any actual scientific tests). Accordingly, it dismisses mediums who believe they can contact the souls of the dead as at best mistaken, if not deluded, and may even suspect them of being mentally ill.

Such prejudices are less frequent amongst many modern ghost hunters, but all too many, particularly those inspired by TV programmes, seem rather as Martin implies to treat investigating manifestations and contacting the dead as some kind of game. Many seem to be avoiding the philosophical implications of their activity or appear oblivious of the fact that they will be reduced to a similar post-mortem state as the entities they are searching out within a limited span of years. But then few ghost hunters and researchers will have encountered a medium like Leonora Piper, whose example is a reminder that it was not ever thus, even amid the rampant materialism of the 19th century.

Psychology (which may be defined as the scientific study of human experience and behaviour) and psychical research (which can be defined as the scientific examination of the paranormal) were, if not intellectual twins, certainly nurtured in adjacent Victorian cots. Prior to 1920, a number of key figures in the history of both subjects bestrode each discipline (it is often forgotten that Sigmund Freud became a member of the Society for Psychical Research). One of the most important pioneers in both fields was American psychologist William James (1842-1910) brother of novelist Henry James, author of *The Turn of the Screw*. William James believed in collecting psychic facts of all sorts and on becoming President of the Society for Psychical Research in 1896 stated: "We must accustom ourselves more and more to playing the rôle of a meteorological bureau, be satisfied for many a year to go without definitive conclusions, confident that if we only keep alive and heap up data, the natural types of them (if there are any) will surely crystallize out; whilst old material that is baffling will get settled as we proceed, through its analogy with new material that will come with the baffling character removed." (Presidential Address, *Proc. of the SPR*, vol.12, 1896-97).

LEFT: Leonora Piper, one of the foremost trance mediums in the history of psychical research.

SHE CONDUCTED THREE DIFFERENT CONVERSATIONS AT THE SAME TIME

James's optimism that piling up extraordinary data in fortean style and applying scientific analysis would yield insights proved woefully wide of the mark. In 1909 he confessed himself to being still just as puzzled as when he had begun. Nonetheless, after many cases of pseudo-paranormal phenomena and spiritualistic fraud aplenty, he was convinced he had encountered one case that could not be explained: that of Leonora Piper (1857-1950), his metaphorical one 'white crow' refuting the dogmas of materialism. (See *Resurrecting Leonora Piper: How Science Discovered The Afterlife* (2013) by Michael Tymm; 'Report of the Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena', by William James (1886) in *History of Psychiatry*, Mar 2016, vol.27, 85-100, introduction by Carlos Alvarado.)

The case of Mrs Piper is certainly one to make opponents of mediumship pant and tremble like nervous horses. Still considered by many as the foremost trance medium in the history of psychical research, she was the subject of numerous experiments over some 40 years in the US and England. A succession of researchers came away convinced she had access to accurate information not obtained by any known sensory channels. The long period of her mediumship even resulted in a number of the original researchers 'returning' as spirits communicating from across death's veil.

During her séances, Mrs Piper would fall into a trance, and her body would be possessed by what purported to be discarnate spirits duly termed 'controls' (in earlier time they would have been called her 'familiar spirits'). Controls would sometimes converse directly with sitters, while at other times would mediate messages from other alleged entities wishing to communicate.

In the first eight years of the SPR's investigation, her main control was 'Phinuit', supposedly a deceased French physician of whom no record was ever found. After 1892 a 'George Pelham' took over speaking and writing through Mrs Piper's hands. Later on, an apparent committee of entities took charge, comprising a number of 'advanced spirits'. Known as the 'Imperator Group', it took control of 'the machine' as they indifferently termed Mrs Piper. Some of these later controls purported to be earlier researchers who had investigated her and predeceased her. Certainly, the writing attributed to the entities directing her pen was a wonder to behold, as she conducted three different conversations at the same time, speaking whilst writing ambidextrously. Whatever its origin, it was an astonishing talent. Also in her trance state Mrs Piper proved impervious to pain, in the manner of hypnotic subjects from the 18th and early 19th centuries, a clear refutation of those social theorists who try explaining trance states (with the exceptions of epilepsy and intoxication) as a sophisticated form of play-acting.

It is impossible to summarise the Piper mediumship herein, but faced with the accumulated evidence for her powers being genuine, the reactions of many sceptics is rather like a person confronted with a cold bath – to try and get out of it. However, a handful have sought to confront and discredit her mediumship, principally by pointing out she made erroneous and ludicrous statements when in a trance condition. This, it is argued, undermined her claims to psychic gifts, (a touching example is at http://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Leonora_Piper on the website declaring itself 'rational Wiki'); but the problem with this approach is that it is like judging a star footballer on the basis of goals missed rather than those scored.

A classic example of Mrs Piper talking nonsense was cited by Commander Rupert T Gould (author of *The Case for the Sea Serpent* and *The Loch Ness Monster and Others*). In his book *Enigmas* (1929), he gleefully cites some trance utterances in 1895 in which a communicator, 'Walter Scott', described wicked monkeys living inside the Sun.

The researcher William Newbold, who recorded the session, stated that when transcribing his notes some 10 miles away later that evening he and Dr Richard Hodgson "fell to laughing over this preposterous statement; so loudly indeed did we laugh that I finally cautioned Dr H that we would be wakening the whole block." But, at a subsequent session he admitted to being taken aback when Mrs Piper's 'Phinuit' control demanded to know with whom he had been laughing, "Actually laughing… yes sir… and roaring enough to split the canopy of space". (Cited in 'Observations of Certain Phenomena of Trance' by William Newbold in *Proceedings of the SPR* vol.14, pp 9-49, 1898-99).

Most pertinently, it overlooks the fact that when making these statements Mrs Piper was in deep trance, akin to a dreaming state. This was something that the investigators fully recognised at the time. Frederic Myers's stated (*Proceedings of the SPR*, vol. VI, p. 440): "There were some interviews throughout which 'Phinuit' hardly asked any questions and hardly stated anything which was not true. There were others throughout which his utterance showed not one glimmer of real knowledge, but consisted wholly of… random assertions".

One arch opponent of psi-research, the late Martin Gardner (1914-2010), published a series of attacks on the Piper mediumship between 1996 and 2003 mirroring sceptical objections raised in the early 20th century and dismissed at the time. (See Martin Gardner *The Encyclopaedia of the Paranormal* (1996) and his essay 'Communicating with the dead: William James and Mrs Piper' anthologised in *The Night is Large* and in his collection *Are Universes Thicker Than Blackberries?* (2003)).

Gardner's articles have provided the foundation for less informed sceptics to denounce the validity of the Piper mediumship, e.g. their use by contributors to such works as *The Myth of An Afterlife* (2015) edited by Michael Keene and Keith Augustine. But Gardner was in turn subject to a wide-ranging critique in *How Martin Gardner Bamboozled the Skeptics* by Greg Taylor, first published online in 2010. The basic thrust of Taylor's rebuttal is that "Gardner states 'facts' which are not just debatable, but completely the opposite to what can be found in the primary sources". (*Daily Grail* http://www.dailygrail.com/essays/2010/11/skeptical-skeptic 10 Nov 2010.)

LEFT: Richard Hodgson was one of many researchers to test Mrs Piper; after his death, his spirit became one of her 'controls'. **BELOW**: G Stanley Hall invented a niece called Bessie Beals; the wholly fictional girl nevertheless answered the questions put to her.

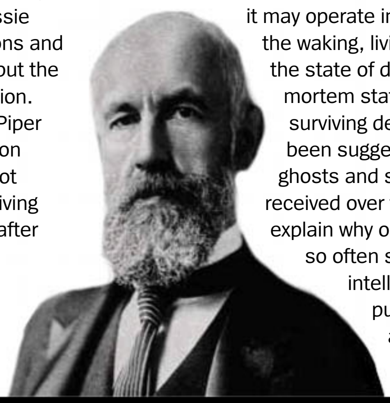
Gardner is no longer around to defend himself on the scaffold of criticism. Perhaps elderly sceptics should (like certain elderly psychical researchers) be forgiven for the errors into which they may creep in the intellectual loneliness of their twilight years. But if you will dish it out, then people are likely to reply in kind. Indeed, if Gardner ever did consult the original sources, his writings on Mrs Piper might best be described as an exercise in planned amnesia in disregarding positive evidence that the contemporary documents provide. Ultimately, the intellectual pit into which sceptics tumble is that in condemning the statements of Mrs Piper for errors and manifest absurdities that appear in the scripts, they also implicitly recognise that on occasions she could be bafflingly accurate.

Among Mrs Piper's later controls, the writer George Pelham (1860-1892) and the erudite psychical researcher Edmund Gurney (1847-1888) were considered unconvincing. The deceased 'Pelham' had apparently lost his knowledge of classic languages and philosophy. Frank Podmore wrote that the Gurney control sounded nothing like the personality of the real Gurney. William James also strongly rejected the claim that Gurney communicated. In an experiment to test if the controls were purely fictitious, the psychologist G Stanley Hall (best known for his work on adolescence) invented a niece called Bessie Beals and asked Piper's 'control' to summon her. Bessie appeared, answered questions and accepted Hall as her uncle, but the Bessie in question was a fiction. But on other occasions Mrs Piper produced accurate information that, at the very least, was not consciously recalled by any living person and only discovered after probing enquiries.

Despite the robust scepticism of yesteryear extending to hiring private detectives to trail her, there was never any evidence that in her normal state she practised fraud, spied on sitters or ever obtained information from contacts or published sources. Looking at the totality of evidence, there was no explanation for Mrs Piper's talents, save a psychical one. Although her powers remained a mystery, the positive conclusions that could be reached were that 'Phinuit' and the controls could not be taken at face value; that sometimes they made incorrect statements and were unable to answer questions correctly; that the medium, when in trance, could potentially and probably did pick up some information from the sitters by muscle-reading (see *Proceedings VI* at 451, and 562) but for most of the time Mrs Piper's 'communicators' used her hand(s) to write, rather than speaking 'through' her voice, severely limiting any chance of contact mind reading. The conclusion was that she had genuine psychic powers. At the very least, this seemed to demonstrate some kind of telepathy or clairvoyance. Later she was involved with what became known as the 'cross correspondences' where separate mediums appeared to disparate messages that, when fitted, suggested surviving discarnate presences contacting the living in a complex code.

The ultimate origin of these communications remains a mystery and although we may use the term 'unconscious mind' we do not understand what it really is. During her period of the most intensive testing, Mrs Piper confessed she did not know where the information came from. In the *Boston Advertiser* of 25 October 1901 she stated: "Spirits of the departed may have controlled me and they may not. I confess that I do not know."

Since then, informed opinion has been divided between those favouring a super-ESP or 'super-psi' explanation of these talents and those considering (as many did at the time) that these were indeed discarnate surviving personalities. However, although such theories can be postulated, presuming either (or both) to be true, we cannot say what they involve. In particular, if consciousness can survive the dissolution of the physical body, it may operate in a wholly different way to the waking, living self, and more akin to the state of dreaming. That the post-mortem state is like a dream for the surviving dead is one that has often been suggested in respect of both ghosts and séance communications received over the years; it might also explain why once great living minds so often seem to have lost their intellectual powers when purportedly communicating after their deaths.



MEDICAL BAG

Amazing bouffant baby, ouija madness down Mexico way, a mysterious outbreak of infectious hallucinations and a stroke victim's newly found ivory-tickling skills

DAVID HILL / DAVEHILL.CO.UK

ABOVE: Junior sports an impressive head of hair for one so young. **BELOW:** The ouija hysteria makes the Mexican TV news.

BABY WITH BOUFFANT

Junior Cox-Noon was born on 30 July weighing 10lb (4.5kg) with a full head of hair (as can be seen in this photograph, when he was just nine weeks old). "He came out with loads of hair," said his mother Chelsea Noon, 32, a hairdresser from Brighton. "Baby hair usually comes out when they rub their head on the back of the cot, but he hasn't lost any of it and it has grown. When I take him with me on the weekly shop everyone does a double-take and says, 'Look at the baby's hair' and they have to touch it. He doesn't seem to mind and gets a little smirk on his face." She has no plans to cut his hair, and blow-dries it because it would take too long naturally. She suffered severe heartburn while pregnant, supporting the folk belief that the more heartburn an expectant mother has, the hairier her baby will be. In pregnant women high levels of œstrogen can both cause heartburn and influence fœtal hair growth. *D.Mail, 5 Oct 2016.*

MASTER STROKE

Roy Calloway, 78, was amazed to discover he could play the piano after suffering a stroke. He had never been able to play any musical instrument before. "I played and I couldn't believe it," he said. "It just came out naturally. I was in shock. I had a heart bypass around 20 years ago and ever since, I've had problems with my heart. I've had countless strokes, but this was the first time anything was noticeably different afterwards." The grandfather of one, who lives alone in Swansea after a divorce, was given a piano after a friend died. "He had been in a band and his son asked me to keep the piano as I had the room," said Mr Calloway. "We moved it into the house and I sat down next to it to have a look. I just wanted to try and played it. It was just as my friend's son was walking into the room and he asked if I had ever played before and that he didn't know I could play. I told him I couldn't."

Mr Calloway has now replaced the piano with an organ, saying: "It's lovely and it has a beautiful sound." He loves tinkling away with tunes from his favourite musicals – 'Over The Rainbow' from *The Wizard of Oz*, 'If I Were A Rich Man' from *Fiddler on the Roof* and 'My Favourite Things' from *The Sound of Music*. "I love playing these tunes, but I'm still baffled as to how I'm able to do it. These tunes must have been deep in my memory and somehow the stroke has activated that part of my brain." *D.Express, D.Mirror, 27 Aug 2016.*

> "I played and I couldn't believe it. It just came out naturally"

90
MENORES CONVULSIONAN TRAS JUGAR CHARLIE CHARLIE
11:38
IQUITOS

OUIJA HYSTERIA

Three teenagers who tried to summon an evil Mexican spirit were exorcised for more than five hours, with clergy frantically reciting prayers, after they were "possessed by demons". The girls were filmed screaming and convulsing on the floor of a church after taking the ouija board-inspired 'Charlie Charlie' challenge – a modern incarnation of a Spanish paper-and-pencil game called *Juego de la Lapicera* (game of the pens). The game is played using held or balanced pencils to produce answers to questions asked by players. Teenage girls have played *Juego de la Lapicera* for generations in Spain and Hispanic America, asking which boys in their class like them. Originally described on the Internet in 2008, the game was popularised in the English-speaking world in 2015, partly through the hashtag #CharlieCharlieChallenge.

In a video clip of the exorcism, one of the teenagers can be seen lurching forward and trying to grapple another youngster. She is quickly restrained by police and church workers who are clutching Bibles in a desperate bid to revive the girls. Following the exorcism, the teenagers were transferred to a local health centre in Iquitos, Peru.

The supposedly "ancient Mexican tradition" involves placing two pencils on a piece of paper in the shape of a cross before writing the words Yes and No inside the four squares formed by the pencils. Brave participants then repeat the words "Charlie, Charlie are you here?" to summon a visit from the demon. However, those who don't say "Goodbye" to

Charlie reportedly experience paranormal phenomena such as hearing voices, things being moved, shadows and sinister laughing. *D.Mirror online, 14 Sept 2016.*

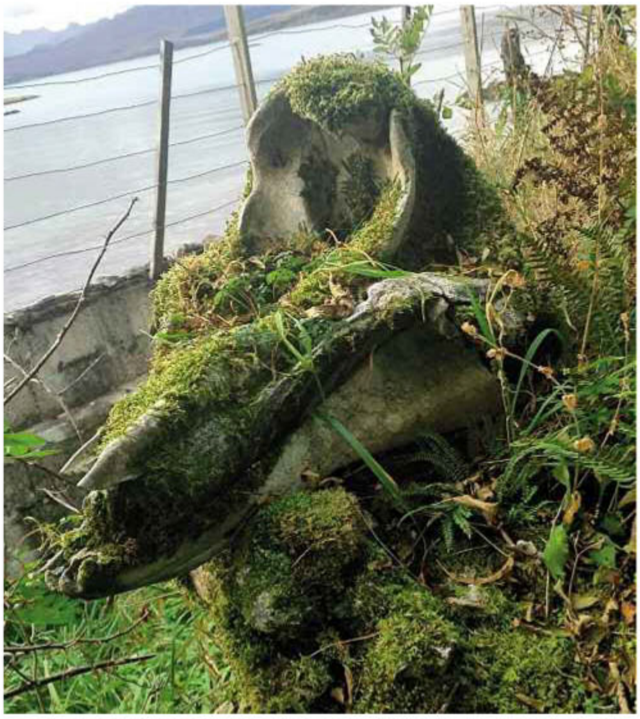
INFECTIOUS HALLUCINATIONS

Five people in Oregon fell ill from an unknown hazardous material that appeared to be spread by contact, causing hallucinations. At 3am on 12 October, a 52-year-old woman in North Bend called the police to report that seven or eight people were trying to take the roof off her car, parked outside the house in Coos Bay where she worked as a caregiver for a 78-year-old woman. A deputy from the Coos Bay Sheriff's Office showed up, but found nothing amiss. The caregiver rang again at 5.30am to report exactly the same thing. This time two deputies took her to Coos Bay Hospital for mental evaluation.

The deputies then reported hallucinations, accompanied by nausea and euphoria; the 78-year-old woman and a hospital employee came down with similar symptoms. Everyone was hospitalised and the emergency room was quarantined. A haz-mat team checked the house, but no source of contaminate was found. Blame then fell on the elderly woman's fentanyl patches (fentanyl is a powerful narcotic). Though all of the patches were accounted for, and blood tests of all involved appeared normal, the hypothesis was that the symptoms spread by contact with the patches, but there was no definitive explanation. Prof James Giordano from Georgetown University Medical Center's Department of Neurology and Biochemistry said that a contaminant was most likely the cause, but that other factors such as *folie à deux* (shared psychotic delusion) was "not out of the realms of possibility". *KVAL-TV (Eugene, OR), 12+13 Oct; The Oregonian, 12 Oct; IFL Science, 18 Oct 2016.*

ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden



EACH UISGE EARBALLACH
HYDRO EQUUS EXTENDUS
LONG-TAILED WATER HORSE
This is the only known example of this rare beast – a distant relative of the better known Monstra Nessium Hydro E.E is usually sighted only twice a year when it swims inshore to browse on whelks. This specimen was stranded at an exceptionally low tide in 1967.

LEFT: The skull of the Scottish water horse. **TOP**: The moss-covered skeleton of the fearsome beast. **ABOVE**: An information plaque at Ord, on the island of Skye, describing the specimen, which was "stranded at an exceptionally low tide in 1967".

LEANNE GERAERTS

A WHALE OF A WATER HORSE!

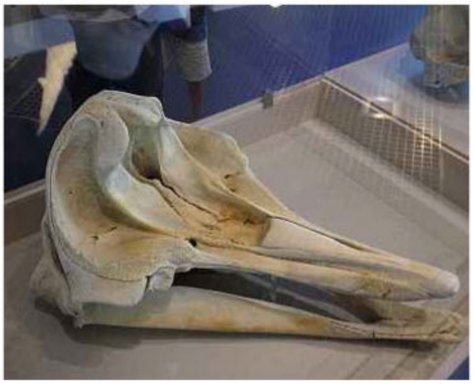
On 15 October 2016, longstanding friend and fellow cryptozoological enthusiast Mike Playfair shared with me on Facebook some fascinating photographs recently snapped on the Inner Hebridean island of Skye by a mutual friend, Leanne Geraerts. Their subject was the alleged skeleton of an each *uisge*, the much-dreaded Scottish water horse! Although a local attraction at Ord on Skye, where it is ensconced in the garden of a private home next to Ord's beach and easily observed close up by passers-by, this remarkable specimen has attracted surprisingly little cryptozoological attention; these were the first photos of it that I had ever seen. According to the somewhat laconic public information plaque alongside it:

"EACH UISGE EARBALLACH
HYDRO EQUUS EXTENDUS
LONG-TAILED WATER HORSE

"This is the only known example of this rare beast – a distant relative of the better known Monstra Nessium Hydro. E.E. is usually sighted only twice a year when it swims inshore to browse on whelks. This specimen was stranded at an exceptionally low tide in 1967."

The skeleton is nowadays greatly overgrown with moss, but its basic anatomical features are still clearly visible, revealing it to be some form of whale. Scouring for more visual material online, I discovered a handful of websites that mentioned it briefly and included a few additional pictures, but surprisingly its precise taxonomic identity did not appear to have been investigated. Consequently, I posted in my Journal of Cryptozoology Facebook group and several others some links to these sites and their photos, which attracted considerable interest. Moreover, based upon close comparisons of photos of its skull with ones depicting those of the various cetacean species known to inhabit or visit Scottish waters, I was able to determine that the water horse of Ord had actually been a Cuvier's beaked whale *Ziphius cavirostris*, an identity also fully supported by fellow cryptozoological investigators Markus Bühler, Markus Hemmler, and Cameron McCormick. For although its skull superficially resembles that of the northern bottlenose whale *Hyperoodon ampullatus*, the shape of the vertex (the upper skull portion, composed of four bones – the frontal, the paired parietals, and the occipital) corresponds much more closely to that of one of the latter species' relatives, *Ziphius*, commonly found in waters surrounding the British Isles. Another crypto-mystery solved. My thanks to Leanne Geraerts for kindly making her photographs available to me, and to Mike Playfair for bringing this wonderful specimen to my attention.

Mike Playfair, Markus Bühler, Markus Hemmler, and Cameron McCormick, pers. and FB comms, 15 Oct 2016.



ABOVE: The skull of a Cuvier's beaked whale – and so the mystery of the Ord water horse is solved.

OPENCAGE / CREATIVE COMMONS

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

More cats and clowns than you can shake a stick at in our latest round-up of further fortean fallout

ANOMALOUS BIG CATS [FT344:20-25]

ForteanTimes
RETURN BIG CATS

In a 90-minute period on an unspecified day in February, three Twitter users in Kent claimed ABC sightings in Maidstone, Sevenoaks and Canterbury. On 13 June, Jane Reddel of St Austell in Cornwall saw an ABC on the river Lynher near St Germans, about 30 miles (48km) east of St Austell. It left pawprints in the mud. On 14 July, a lorry driver identified only as Duncan reported that what he described as a lioness, sandy-coloured with black markings on its face and a dark tail, jumped out in front of his vehicle near the Imerys Minerals clay pit, between Nanpean and Whitemoor in St Austell, where he worked. He didn't report the sighting to Devon and Cornwall Police until three days after the recapture on 30 July of Flaviu, the Carpathian lynx that had been on the run for three weeks after escaping from Dartmoor Zoo. Police found giant pawprints at the clay pit. In a radio interview, Duncan said he now thought the ABC could have been a puma; it was certainly larger than Flaviu. On 1 August, the body of a three-week-old foal was found mutilated between Brea and Camborne, about 25 miles (40km) from the clay pit. The foal had chunks of flesh torn from its back, and there was a large pawprint nearby. Police suspected a dog or pack of dogs, but the foal's owner disagreed. The next day, lorry driver Brian Goldsworthy said he had found a decapitated baby deer less than half a mile from the clay pit. A black ABC was reportedly seen several times near Tewksbury in Gloucestershire in late July.

On 3 August, Jason Young, 43, said he and others had seen a "black panther" hunting deer near the Roman remains in Ambleside in the Lake District while on holiday at some unspecified earlier time. Edna Pepper, 76, driving from Keswick to her home in Ambleside on 25 July, say a black ABC sitting on a rock beside the busy A591. A man was also reported to have seen a "black panther" on the A591 close to Rydal.

ABOVE: Lee Clifford was walking near his home near Hull when he photographed this puma-like ABC in 2013, although he only came foward with the photo earlier this year.

SWNS.COM

In the first week of August, Roger Cheetham of Blackpool, and 30 (!) members of his family, were camping at Ewegales Farm in Cowgill, near Sedbergh in Cumbria, when he spotted a large black ABC. "I shouted 'Everybody out' to make sure everybody saw it," he said. On 11 August, retired Cleveland police chief Kevin Pitt, 62, on holiday at the Wild Rose Caravan Park at Ormside, near Appleby in Cumbria, photographed a large black ABC about 250m (720ft) away on an Eden railway embankment, part of the Settle to Carlisle line. Mr Pitt, who has lived in Zambia and South Africa and seen large cats in the wild, is convinced the creature was feline, not canine.

In late August, a black ABC with a 3ft (90cm) tail was seen by several witnesses round the village of Silsoe, Bedfordshire, and in the neighbouring villages of Flitwick and Barton. On 27 August Steve Swatton and Brad Bugdale spotted a black ABC in bushes near Sparkwell village, close to Dartmoor Zoo. It was about 50 yards (45m) away.

Lee Clifford, 44, of North Cave near Hull, East Yorkshire, was walking near his home in 2013 when he spotted and photographed a golden brown ABC hiding behind a tree. It stood still for about 15 seconds before slinking off. He didn't publicise his photo until September 2016. Late September saw several ABC sightings across Lincolnshire in Toynton All Saints, near Spilsby, and at Partney and Mablethorpe. Two mutilated hares found in Skellingthorpe. Black ABC seen in Sibsey, Lincs, on 14 October.

ABOVE: Phillip White filmed this ABC behind his home in Great Alne, Warwickshire.

PHILLIP WHITE / SWNS.COM

On 9 October, Iain MacDonald of Harpenden, Hertfordshire, encountered a black ABC, 4ft (1.2m) to 5ft (1.5m) long, with a long tail, in Chilton Green, near Luton Airport. There had been several sightings of a similar beast in Hitchin three weeks earlier. Pawprint 5in (13cm)-wide found in clay pit in Treviscoe, Cornwall on 19 October.

At about 10am on 29 October, Phillip White, 39, of Great Alne, Warwickshire, looked out of a window and spotted an ABC in a field behind his home, about 230ft (70m) away, and managed to film it. It appeared to be around 4ft (1.2m) in length, with a black tail and patterned markings similar to a lynx. He had seen it before, but never had his camera handy. It was later claimed to be a 14-month-old Bengal cat called Hiro, living locally. A similar animal, described as a large feline creature with leopard makings, was spotted on 8 October in the same area.

SOURCES

D.Mirror, 26 Feb; D.Mail, 1+3+4+5+6 Aug, 11 + 14 Nov; Western Daily Press, 3+6+30 Aug; D.Telegraph, 4+23 Aug; Westmorland Gazette, 4+11 Aug; <i> 20 Aug; D.Mirror (online), 18 Sept; D.Express, 19 Sept, 20 Oct; Hull D.Mail (online), 20 Sept; Lincolnshire Echo, 6 Oct; Herts Advertiser, 13+20 Oct; D.Telegraph + D.Mirror (online), 10 Nov; Metro, 11 Nov 2016.

CARRY ON CLOWNING [FT346:28-35]

ForteanTimes

This year's wave of creepy/sinister/'killer' clowns continued after our survey of incidents in the last issue, but tailed off soon after Hallowe'en, eclipsed perhaps by the electoral triumph of the world's scariest horror-clown on 8 November. Many more clippings have arrived at Fortean Towers reporting further sightings and attacks throughout October, particularly in the UK and Australia. A comprehensive listing might tax our readers' patience, so the following chronology is largely

LEFT: By late October the creepy clown craze had spread to the Far East, with lurking clowns photographed in numerous locations in Singapore (left), and a children's park in Kuala Lumpur (below).

confined to the later stages of this season's coulromania. To simplify matters, the term 'clown' here covers both people in full comic regalia and those merely wearing sinister clown masks.

12 OCT Cheshire police log 106 clown-related incidents from 6 to 12 October, 38 of which were directed at children or happened near schools. In 26 incidents, clowns roamed together in groups as large as 10. There were 21 incidents in Warrington, 18 in Runcorn, 12 in Widnes.

14 Oct – In Tunbridge Wells, Kent, two men in a van, wearing clown masks, approach boy who runs away. Several similar incidents in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells in following days. Clown reported standing over the body of dead dog in Hocking County, Ohio, but the dog was probably hit by car.

15 OCT Clown chases group of girls in Yeovil, Somerset. In a US poll conducted by *Vox* magazine and Morning Consult on 15-17 October, 42 per cent of Americans said they were more afraid of clowns than a possible terrorist attack, climate change, economic hardship, the death of a loved one, or the always-terrifying Obamacare.

16 OCT Cleaner Krzysztof Rudzki, 22, arrested for prowling round Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, armed with a pair of nunchucks (wooden sticks joined with a chain), looking for sinister clowns. Given 12-month community order with 120 hours unpaid work.

18 OCT Woman and child left terrified after clown bangs on their door in Mere, Wiltshire. In Northallerton, North Yorkshire, five clowns armed with bats and swords smash their way into house and stab 26-year-old man, who is hospitalised. Other incidents in York, Chester-le-Street and Brotton.

19 OCT More than 100 clown incidents reported to West Midlands Police between 1 and 19 October: 30 incidents in Walsall, 29 in Sandwell, 23 in Dudley and 19 in Wolverhampton. Calls ranged from a "clowning sighting in a park" to "people on a bus wearing clown masks" to "threatened by clowns". Man dressed as Spiderman patrols Burnley and Padiham in Lancashire, to protect children from sinister clowns. Clown approaches five children aged seven to 13 in a dimly lit subway in Bochum, western **Germany**, holding a "shiny object" (knife?). In neighbouring Gwelsenkirchen, two clowns charge deaf man, 33, with a knife, causing slight injuries.

20 OCT Clown threatens 15-year-old boy with knife in Rostock, northern **Germany;** boy runs away. Later, the same or another clown beats up a 19-year-old man with a baseball bat. A clown with a chainsaw jumps out of bushes in Wesel, western Germany, and threatens a 48-year-old woman. He fails to start chainsaw and the woman escapes.

21 OCT Police in Cumbria say they were called to 77 clown-related incidents between 9 and 17 October. Three reports of threatening clowns in Zurich, **Switzerland,** over "the past few days". Clown swinging an axe chases 19-year-old in Munich, Germany.

22 OCT Two clowns allegedly assault drunken woman, 27, outside her home in Warren, Ohio.

23 OCT Clown jumps out from behind tree in Vienna, **Austria**, blows party horn, spooking a horse that throws its 19-year-old woman rider who suffers cuts and bruises.

24 OCT Clown with knife seen lurking on unlit path in Arbroath in Scotland.

25 OCT Clown waving hammer tries to frighten group of young people in Berlin, **Germany**. A 14-year-old stabs the clown, who turns out to be a 16-year-old acquaintance, and is rushed to hospital. Two clowns jump from bushes in Schwaz, western **Austria**, and chase a 19-year-old, who is hit with a baseball bat. Damaris Aponte, 25, allegedly attacked by three clowns when she opened her front door in Providence, Rhode Island; she fights back and they scarper.

26 OCT Man stabbed and hospitalised after confronting nine-year-old girl wearing clown mask in Portsmouth. Clown threatens bus driver in Vienna, **Austria**, and vandalises bus. Police in **Germany** have noted 370 clown incidents. Clown jumps out from behind bush with chainsaw in Coburg, Bavaria, starts chainsaw and chases two teenagers, who escape. Facebook posting claims that "German newspapers" were saying a group of more than 1,000 people from Sweden and Germany are working together as part of a killer clown group, and many of those people are "Nazis" who are against refugees. They are murdering adults and kidnapping children, the poster claimed. Clown photographed lurking in a park in Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**. Clown filmed lurking at various locations in **Singapore**.

27 OCT Candice A Kreidel, 37, arrested for chasing cars and jumping in and out of traffic in Cunningham, Tennessee, half naked and wearing clown makeup.

28 OCT Man stabbed repeatedly after being chased by four clowns near San Diego State University, California.

31 OCT A man in Greeneville, Tennessee, trades gunfire with clown. 44 clown-related incidents, several involving weapons, reported to Cambridgeshire police since 6 October. One call to Coventry police about clowns every day during October, five involving people chased by clowns.

2 NOV Clown stabs woman in leg through her letterbox in Linden, Gloucestershire.

4 NOV Four clowns with knives, clubs and a chainsaw, driving a "multi-coloured car", threaten two girls at the Bolderslev asylum centre in Jutland, **Denmark**.

Special thanks again to Brian Chapman for collating worldwide clown reports.

SOURCES

Sunday Mirror, 16 Oct; Eve. Standard, 17+25 Oct; Sunday Express, 18 Oct; Salisbury Journal, Western Gazette, WCMH-TV (Columbus OH), 20 Oct; Northern Echo, Vox, Deutsche Welle (Germany), News & Star, 21 Oct; The Local (Switzerland), 24 Oct, WFMJ-TV (Youngstown OH), 24 Oct; [AP] 25 Oct; Providence (RI) Journal, 26 Oct; The Local (Austria), D.Mirror online, 27 Oct, 1 Nov; (Dundee) Courier & Advertiser, Malaysian Digest, The Local (Germany), The Leaf Chronicle (Clarksville TN), 28 Oct; KGTV (San Diego CA), 29 Oct; Straits Times (Singapore), 30 Oct; Chester Chronicle, 31 Oct; Guardian, Greeneville (TN) Sun, 1 Nov; Gloucestershire Live, 3 Nov; Liverpool Echo, 3 Nov; Vocativ, 7 Nov; The Local (Denmark), 7 Nov; Express & Star, 7 Nov; Coventry Telegraph, 7 Nov 2016.

NECROLOG

This month, we say goodbye to the many personalities of the woman behind *The Three Faces of Eve*, an authority on myth and magic and an eminent Ripperologist.

GERALD MARTINEAU / THE WASHINGTON POST

CHRIS SIZEMORE

Sizemore grew up in a large family in the American South. In the space of a few months in 1929, when she was aged just two, she witnessed a series of macabre incidents involving violent injury and death: her mother badly cut in a kitchen accident; a man severed in three by machinery at the lumber mill where her father worked; and a drowned man pulled from a ditch. A baby cousin's funeral was particularly awful for her, and she recalled attending it with an imaginary friend, a flame-haired child with bright eyes.

Sizemore was the subject – under an assumed name – of the bestselling psychiatric study *The Three Faces of Eve*, which documented her treatment for multiple-personality disorder and became a 1957 film starring Joanne Woodward. After the film, the disorder was ushered further into the mainstream by the 1970s book and TV movie *Sybil,* starring Sally Field as a woman with more than a dozen personalities. Multiple-personality disorder, now more commonly called dissociative identity disorder, was included in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in the 1980s, but remains a contested diagnosis.

Sizemore had been referred to psychiatrists Corbett H Thigpen and Hervey M Cleckley in Augusta, Georgia, suffering from blinding headaches, accompanied by blackouts and erratic behaviour. She also confessed to hearing a voice that taunted her about her husband. Initially, the doctors put her symptoms down to the stress of raising a family, but after several months into therapy a completely different personality emerged, as brazen as Chris Sizemore's other self was demure. Thigpen and Cleckley dubbed this provocative self "Eve Black", a reckless barfly, while the dominant yet quieter personality was "Eve White", a mousy housewife. It was Eve Black who had tried to choke Chris Sizemore's two-year-old daughter, leading her to seek psychiatric help for the first time. While Eve White liked reading, Eve Black preferred to spend her days at the cinema and her evenings in nightclubs.

In *The Three Faces of Eve*, Thigpen and Cleckley described their efforts to encourage the emergence and eventual dominance of "Jane", a third, more capable personality. The study, which was published in 1957, declared their therapy successful, but for Chris Sizemore there were further struggles ahead. Jane died and more personalities took over, always in groups of three. They would function together for a time, then drop away and be replaced by others. Their ages would vary, as did their characters and even their physical health. There was the Strawberry Lady, who was 21, went barefoot and ate only strawberries. The Banana Split Girl was a temperamental child who would only consume that dessert. The Purple Lady appeared when Chris Sizemore was 46 and felt herself to be 58 years old; she suffered from joint pain and sprayed her hair grey. The Virgin wore no makeup and could not stand to be touched by her husband. The Spoon Lady collected spoons. The Blind Lady could not see. There was the Retrace Lady who never liked to take the same route twice. Some personalities could drive while others could not, and they tended to switch at inopportune times. Each switch would be accompanied by headaches and facial contortions, which her second husband Don Sizemore had initially mistaken for signs of a stroke. She struggled to hold down a job and attempted suicide. In 1970 the family moved to Fairfax, Virginia, where she finally made progress under the care of Tony Tsitos, her eighth therapist. For four years the two of them worked at reintegrating her various "psychic sisters" to form a coherent personality. "For me, being one person isn't easy", she told an interviewer in 1976. The final "sister", who was mute, emerged briefly and then receded while she was trying to finish her autobiography, *I Am Eve*, written with the help of a cousin.

In all, Sizemore reckoned that about 22 different personalities emerged over 40 years, but she had no professional help until she was 24, when she was diagnosed with atypical schizophrenia. The doctors recommended electric shock therapy, but Eve Black objected and stormed out of the hospital. Another year went by before Chris Sizemore was referred to Thigpen and Cleckley, who diagnosed multiple-personality disorder.

Later therapy sessions allowed her to harness her talents – several personalities had shown artistic abilities – and she made a living selling paintings and giving lectures. Of all her personalities she claimed to like Eve Black best, since she was "an honest person". Husband Don, however, had fallen in love with Jane. Her first marriage, to Gene Rogers, was dissolved. She is survived by a daughter from her first marriage and a son from her second marriage.

In her book *A Mind of My Own* (1989), Sizemore wrote: "Despite authorities' claims to the contrary, my former alters were not fragments of my birth personality. They were entities, whole in their own right, who coexisted with my birth personality before I was born. They were not me, but they remain intrinsically related to what it means to be me." See 'First Person Plural' by Paul Chambers, **FT130:34-40**.

Christine 'Chris' Costner, afterwards Sizemore, multiple personality, born Edgefield, South Carolina, 4 April 1927; died Ocala, Florida 24 July 2016, aged 89.

RICHARD WHITTINGTON-EGAN

Educated at Stonyhurst College, Richard Whittington-Egan studied medicine before joining the Army and serving in France, Germany, Austria and Italy. He assisted in the autopsy of Benito Mussolini. After the war, he became a journalist and author. His first book was *Liverpool Colonnade* (1955). He published widely on Liverpool history, literary biography, and various true crime cases. His early books – *The Riddle of Birdhust Rise* and *The Ordeal of Philip Yale Drew* – are considered classics within their genre, and his *Definitive Casebook on Jack the Ripper* is a magisterial account of that great mystery.

Whittington-Egan had a genuine interest in the paranormal. An indefatigable chronicler of Liverpool ghosts and hauntings, he also produced a series of five *Weekend Books of Ghosts and Horror* between 1975 and 1985, which are well worth seeking out. In 2010, he published a biography of the mysterious Teresa Higginson, a religious fanatic who believed herself to be persecuted by the Devil, and who is thought by some to have a claim to sainthood. In 2016 he published a full-length biography of ghost-hunter Elliott O'Donnell.

For many years, Whittington-Egan lived in Great Malvern with his wife Molly, in a house that became too small for him over the years due to his very large library. He was widely admired among true crime aficionados and Ripper enthusiasts, was generous to his circle of younger friends, and will be sorely missed as one of the last 'old school' criminologists and literary men.

Richard Whittington-Egan, author and criminologist, born Liverpool 22 Oct 1924; died Worcester 14 Sept 2016, aged 91.

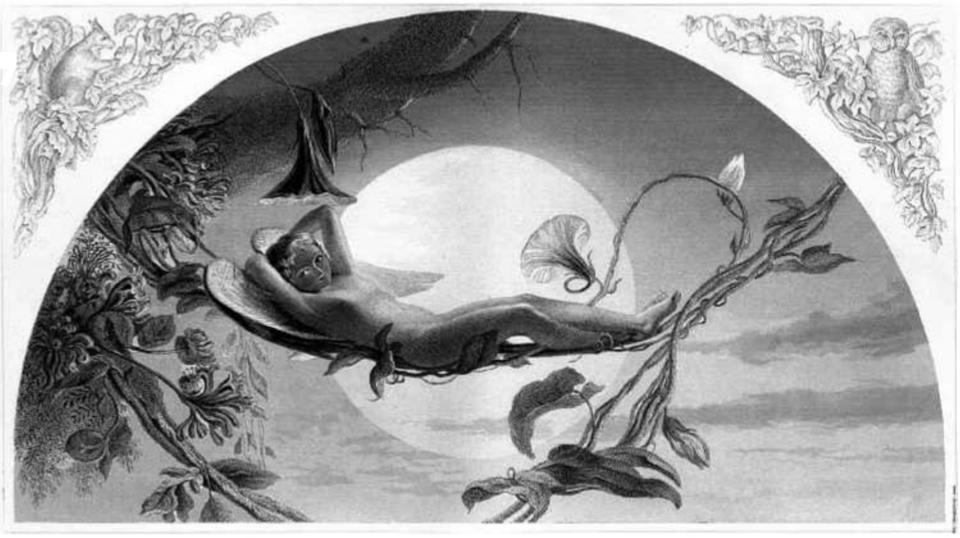
Jan Bondeson

RICHARD CAVENDISH

Cavendish was an authority on magic, myth and witchcraft whose book *The Black Arts* (1967) became a bestseller, at a time when the notorious occultist and voluptuary Aleister Crowley had been reinterpreted as an exemplar of countercultural freedom. Anthony Powell in *The Daily Telegraph* described the book as "the standard work on contemporary occultism". Cavendish himself was agnostic about the beliefs and practices he documented, admitting that many of them were "liberally embellished with lunacy". He viewed the whole subject with a mixture of fascination and respect. "I think basically it is a terrific reaction against materialism," he said in 1970. "They are turning towards mysticism and yoga because all these things involve looking inside yourself for the truth. The current catchphrase, 'doing your own thing', is very applicable to magic and mysticism."

After the success of *The Black Arts*, Cavendish went on in 1970 to found and edit the weekly magazine *Man, Myth and Magic*, bringing the Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade on to the board. Its contents were repackaged as a 24-volume partwork entitled *Encyclopædia of the Supernatural: Man, Myth, and Magic* (1970-72). Cavendish's books continued to attract good reviews, notably *The Tarot* (1976), which for Margaret Lane in *The Daily Telegraph* "[cast] a pleasantly insidious spell over the reader". *A History of Magic* (1977) was a comprehensive study in which Cavendish observed, with sly humour, that "a fondness for histrionics is a necessary characteristic of magicians, and so is power-hunger." His other works included *The Powers of Evil in Western Religion, Magic and Folk Belief* (1975), *Visions of Heaven and Hell* (1977), and *King Arthur and the Grail* (1978).

Richard Cavendish, writer on magic, born Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire 12 Aug 1930; died 21 Oct 2016, aged 86.



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

THE WOLLATON PARK GNOMES

The Wollaton Park Gnomes are a fortean classic (see **FT31:42, 200:34, 321:43-45**). On 23 September 1979, six primary school children went for an early evening walk in a park in Nottingham: Angela, Julie, Glen, Andrew, Rosie and Patrick. The children were then approached by about 30 small cars, each with a gnome driver and passenger. The gnome cars did not obey the normal rules of physics. They were able to jump over logs and left no marks in the mud. There was no noise from the engines, but there were bell sounds and triangular car lights.

The experience was interesting in several respects. First, there are many instances of children coming face to face with fairies, but I know of none where six saw the fey together. Second, the children were apparently from the same school and the headmaster tape-recorded an interview with three of them: Angela, Patrick and Andrew. Third, though this recording no longer exists – at least I don't think it does, but watch this space – it was listened to by Marjorie Johnson, the secretary of the Fairy Investigation Society. Her account in *Seeing Fairies* uses this as its source. So many fortean experiences depend on a single shaky witness or poor chain of custody for the evidence: this is not the case with Wollaton.

As to the experience itself, what can be made of it? The children, for example, agreed in most of what they said – but saw, strangely, very different colours. There is also a brief reference to the fact that the children – all? – had seen these gnomes before. However, the detail that I find fascinating is the similarity of the Wollaton Park Gnomes to Noddy and Big Ears. Noddy and Big Ears were a creation of Enid Blyton, and first appeared in print in 1949: a living wooden puppet and a bearded brownie duo. They starred on television from the mid 1950s and Noddy regularly drove Big Ears around in a two-seater car. Andrew, in fact, said that the gnomes had hats "like the nightcaps people wore in olden days" and he talked of "Noddy", who always wore just this kind of hat. Witnesses, of course, describe the unknown with reference to the known. In the Fairy Census of modern fairy sightings that I'm presently collating, there are lots of references to fairies like Tinker Bell, and Barbies, and even Gollum. But what does this really mean? Are witnesses using films, books and toys to help them describe the paranormal; *or are these films, books and toys actually influencing what the witnesses see*? The Wollaton Park sightings badly need a longer study. If anyone can put me in touch with any of those now grown children, I'd be extremely grateful…

ANDREW SAID THAT THE GNOMES HAD HATS "LIKE THE NIGHTCAPS PEOPLE WORE IN THE OLDEN DAYS"

Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs www.fairyist.com

the UFO files

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FLYING SORCERY

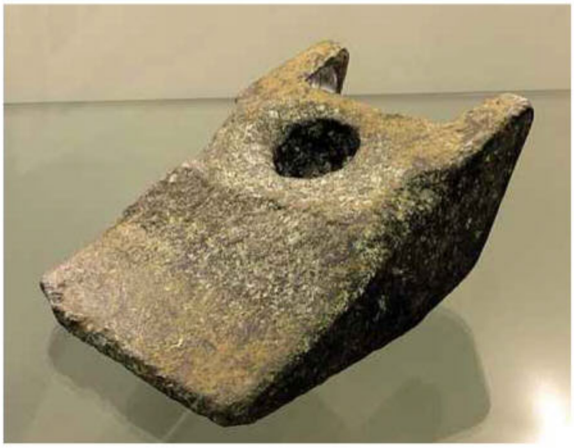
PETER BROOKESMITH PRESENTS HIS REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

SOME UFOS DON'T FLY

The notion that flying saucers crewed by aliens from elsewhere have been landing here for thousands of years has been floating around ufology since forever, and well before the likes of Erich von Däniken, Robert Temple, Zachariah Sitchin and company began peddling their, er, sincerely deluded theories. You may gather how the logic runs: the older an artefact, the more likely it is to be the handiwork of the space visitors, and it helps if there's at least a smidgin of mystery about it. The trope continues among ancient-astronaut *aficionados*. And so the curtain rises on Romania, tugged aloft by the *Daily Mirror*...

On 20 October, Kara O'Neill reported that a chunk of machined or cast aluminium, "dating back 250,000 years" according to the headline, had been unveiled at the History Museum of Cluj-Napoca in Transylvania. It was discovered in 1973, but the then-communist régime gets the blame for keeping shtum about it for so long (the régime fell in 1989, but never mind). It's in the nature of the red-top press to be a trifle inexact over anything even faintly scientific, but it seems the item was uncovered when builders "working on the shores of the Mures River not far from the central Romanian town of Aiud found three objects 10m (33ft) under the ground". Archæologists determined that two of these were large bones that "belonged to a large extinct mammal that died 10,000-80,000 years ago", though we're not told what the mammal was or why the range of dates is so huge. The metal thing, which measures 20cm (7.8in) long, 12.5cm (4.9in) wide and 7cm (2.8ins) thick, does indeed look manufactured and as if it formed "part of a more complex mechanical system". Matters become yet murkier when O'Neill gets to the thing's age.

"According to tests," she writes, "the object is made of 12 metals, 90 per cent aluminium, and it was dated by Romanian officials as being 250,000 years old. The initial results were later confirmed by a lab in Lausanne, Switzerland. Other experts who conducted later tests said the dates were far later, ranging between 400 and 80,000 years old, but even at 400 years old it would still be 200 years earlier than when aluminium was first produced." What she doesn't even mean is *mass* produced: true, the metal was first reliably isolated in the mid 1820s, but it was a tricky, expensive business, and even as late as the 1880s aluminium was more valuable than gold. It wasn't until the late 1890s that the Hall-Héroult process made large-scale extraction of metal from ore a practical matter.



Nr. 2(15)
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RAPORT UFO ROMÂNIA - ROMANIAN UFO REPORT
CAZURI OZN, ENIGMELE TERREI, FENOMENE PARANORMALE
Apare lunar - 36 pagini - preţul 995 lei / 2,5$ /4DM
POSIBILUL OBIECT EXTRATERESTRU DE LA AIUD
Pag. 19
SUPER-CONCURS!
MESAJ PENTRU CIVILIZAŢII
EXTRATERESTRE (Pag. 33)

LEFT: The Aiud artefact.
LEFT: The mysterious metal thingy appears on the cover of a French UFO magazine.

'Ere, Missiz! as they say in Grimsby. What officials? Which archæologists? What labs? Which 'experts'? (People have had enough of experts, we have lately been told. And rightly, when they can't be held to account.) What other metals? O'Neill doesn't say, but she does name one 'expert': "Gheorghe Cohal, the Deputy Director of the Romanian Ufologists Association, told local media: 'Lab tests concluded it is an old UFO fragment given that the substances it comprises cannot be combined with technology available on Earth.'" And he'd know, wouldn't he?

Rather more informative were some of the 277 comments (many ironic, some very witty) the article attracted. Richard Bell observed shrewdly: "It looks like an excavator bucket tooth. The teeth break off excavator buckets all of the time, and there is brisk business for metal forging facilities to make replacements, usually out of steel (stronger, cheaper, if heavier). As it was found near a river, and rivers move, it is possible for the artifact to be a tooth fallen from a river dredger's bucket (as river dredgers must float, their excavator buckets are more likely to have aluminum teeth), and the channel of the river was later allowed to meander away from where the tooth fell." And he reminded everyone that "the uncovering of the tooth is just as mysterious as 'ancient' tightly coiled tungsten wire unearthed in the former Soviet Union that turned out to be from light bulbs that were part of buried garbage from a secret military base."

Raymond Scheel considered the context: "Aluminum excavator bucket teeth (EBTs) are used in volatile environments because they do not spark like steel EBTs do, like the coal mines around the area this was found. Just a quick search will reveal that aluminum EBTs can be ordered from multiple manufacturers." Others noted that accurately dating chunks of metal is difficult (as, perhaps, the *Mirror*'s report might have hinted, guffaw). Others suggested the thing was a rocker arm, a pawl, an aircraft part, a front-end loader tooth, the lower control arm for a 1958 Plymouth Satellite, a rudder head, a foot pedal that lifts a trashcan lid... Wags asserted variously that it was "obviously" the built-in drink holder from the centre console of a UFO, Stalin's toilet seat, or a "piece of the Forward Harness Assembly from Santa's Sled", which is festive enough for this issue of FT.

Many of the commentators took a different fortean line and speculated that the thing was a relic of an ancient, lost, 'highly advanced' civilisation. Which was an interesting surprise. The History Museum of Cluj-Napoca has soberly labelled the item: "Origin still unknown".

Merry Yule, one and all!

UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES ASKS WHERE DID ALL THE ALIENS GO AND WHAT DOES THEIR ABSENCE TELL US?

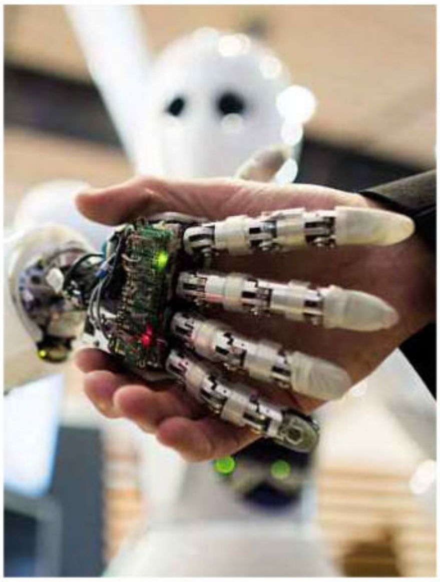
MORE THAN HUMAN

Here's an intriguing mystery about the UFO phenomenon: where have all the aliens gone? Aliens, after all, are pretty much the definition of UFOs for the world at large. While researchers might suspect an undefined energy intermittently active within our atmosphere triggers many sightings (and could provide a technological pay-off to justify the curiosity of world governments), I suspect that for most people – and certainly for the mass media – 'UFO' and 'alien spaceship' are synonymous terms: if you've seen a UFO or believe that they exist then you are marked out as one of those nitwits proclaiming that 'they' have landed. It's good for a filler news story, but doesn't require deeper study. This media approach was predictable, given the sales potential of aliens, but misleading, as the vast majority of cases were always going to be caused by something more mundane. Those cases that did lead us to consider the possibility of alien contact featured credible witnesses who saw not just strange lights in the sky but beings that appeared alien in origin, sometimes taking humans aboard their craft and professing that they had indeed come from 'out there'.

But, I repeat, where exactly are these aliens today? Have they packed up and gone home, fed up with Brexit and the US election? Or were they just a passing phase within a grand mirage, defining the appearance of the UFO phenomenon for a certain period? Could these aliens have been a misperception – not in the sense of how a flock of birds or a weather balloon can cause simple sightings – but a *cultural* misperception that adapted what we saw into something matching our expectations as a society? Perhaps we were just living through a narrow window in human history where we gained the power to seek our origins by gazing out into the Universe? If so, did we see what we *hoped* to see during this period of human expansion and mould the UFO phenomenon accordingly into a pattern that matched the age we were living through? And has that age now moved on, and in our new conceptualisation does our species no longer need to 'love the alien' quite so much as we did?

Some evidence supports this, given that at the height of space exploration in 1976 there were more than 20 well-documented alien contacts studied in the UK alone and hundreds worldwide. Yet in 2016, I can find less than a dozen reported anywhere. This dramatic change is not easily explained just by the dearth of UFO investigation groups, which once flourished in every city. The Internet is awash with sites making it easier than ever to tell your story; indeed sightings of UFOs are as abundant as ever, just not their occupants.

So this suggests that something more fundamental has changed in the mechanics of how the UFO phenomenon emerges into daily life. Maybe there *were* real aliens but they have gone home or learned how to fly over Roswell or Rendlesham without mishap; but I suspect the real key lies with the witnesses themselves and their perception of what happens.



All close encounters are focused on an individual who sees something and reports the result as a personal catharsis. The way in which this then filters through contemporary culture is undersold by researchers as they understandably assume a physical phenomenon is at the heart of the mystery, because that vindicates their interest in UFOs as more than a 'dream'.

It has been astutely observed for decades by the likes of Jacques Vallee that 'aliens' and 'fairies' share many features, and others such as Hilary Evans have contemplated the idea that unrelated types of 'contact – such as with deceased spirits – are similar and may imply that UFO contacts are part of an ever-changing track coursing through our soul. Yet these entities themselves still cling on intact when we contemplate their actual reality, as if they are 'tricksters' who keep changing, deceiving us into thinking they are something else while continuing their long deception of humanity: John Keel loved that concept.

However, an equally fascinating possibility emerges when you realise that there is just a single common denominator that is undeniably real in all UFO encounters: the human beings who undergo the experience and their evolving consciousness that perceives and interprets it.

Misperceived UFO sightings have changed a lot with time: from mysterious airships 100 years ago and aircraft-like formations of 'super jets' post World War II, to dancing globes of light when laser shows were the new 'tech' of the 1980s and, in recent years, multiple balls of fire drifting across the sky when Chinese lanterns are *de rigour* for almost any celebration. These IFOs (Identified Flying Objects) make up the bulk of the UFO mystery (over 95 per cent), so it's worth noting how these misperceptions have constantly updated the form that the UFO takes as a witness misinterprets whatever new thing is up there in the sky. The classic UFO shape has clearly altered over the decades because of this ongoing misidentification process – changing from formations of aircraft on to large triangles and so on. That seems to be a big clue – and it also suggests we might anticipate similar shifting sands within the more puzzling five per cent of the non-IFO sightings, like those involving entities.

Underneath the hard core of the ever-changing UFO model there have always been hidden depths where our social and cultural interpretation is hard at work, evolving out of our belief systems and developing concepts about what exists above and beyond us and whence any unresolved enigmas might therefore emerge.

Just like the ever-shifting IFOs, this sense of something beyond us has mutated from the gods of centuries past, to the elemental beings and fairies of the pre-industrial age and the mystical denizens of ethereal realms that blossomed during Victorian industrialisation. Today's aliens might be seen by a future age as just more of the same: human displacement shifting our perception of something intangible and dressing it up in clothes that suit whatever societal stage we are passing through. If so, we may be on the cusp of a change into another phase of this perpetual transmutation that carries the UFO mystery with it. But what will be the next form that this contact with an undefined 'other' adopts? What comes *after* UFOs and aliens?

We need to ask what kind of 'alien' contact is happening today; its form may not be easily apparent, lying beyond our defined boundaries of the UFO mystery. I suspect the aliens of old are still out there somewhere – as there seems to be a human need to locate (or create) super beings above and beyond us. We may be more rational as a species thanks to advances in knowledge, but we have a spiritual dimension not readily suppressed by modern reductionism. It will find an 'out', but perhaps not in the form of traditional alien abductions.

If we are moving away from aliens as would-be rescuers from forces beyond our control, then what will now serve and protect our species and fill this vacuum in the human soul? One hint might come from our cultural mood and developing obsession with artificial intelligence.

Think of what might be emergent via super computers or technology that outpaces its intent and evolves; or superior animate beings such as androids that take on sentience and grow from our servants into our masters. This idea is not new, of course, but TV has started to embrace these ideas through series such as *Humans* and *Westworld*, which might be surfing a wave within the developing stream of consciousness.

Of course, to return to an earlier point, there is one common denominator linking all these perceptions of something above and beyond us – gods or aliens or intelligent machines. That linking factor is us: the possessors of the consciousness that perceives them all. Regardless of where the aliens have gone or what they will morph into next, perhaps they were always far closer to home than a spaceship floating above our heads.

CARSTEN KOALL / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

THE CHANGING MASK OF KRAMPUS

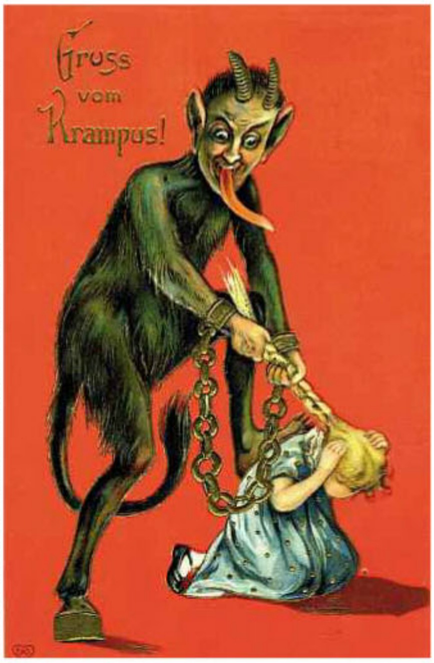
Mixing mediæval superstition with 19th century Catholicism, the devilish figure of the Krampus has undergone a surprising revival in recent years. **AL RIDENOUR** reconnects with the dark side of Christmas, tracing Krampus's roots in Austro-German folklore and exploring the figure's continuing evolution and growing popularity in the 21st century.

Once upon a time, he was nothing but fear and shadows, a confusion of possible claws, teeth and horns. If he had a face at all, it was nothing a child wanted to see, yet through fearfully squinted eyes, it still appeared – a bit of leather, shaped and painted with monstrous features or a flat, roughly carved mask fixed with goat horns. Or maybe nothing but furiously white eyes burning in a face blackened with soot and lard.

In reality, of course, it was just someone's uncle Bruno dressed in grimy rags – work clothes hung in the barn for the dirtiest of chores – topped by an ancient, knee-length shepherd's coat, inside-out to show the fur, or accented with crusty old pelts and scraps of threadbare carpet for shaggier effect.

A little over a century ago, this was all the Krampus was: an amorphous Austro-Bavarian bogeyman made concrete through rough materials readily and cheaply available on an Alpine farmstead. He wore bells removed from livestock at their return from pasture on St Martin's Day and stomped and clattered about the kitchen, menacing children with a twiggy broom or switches normally used to sweep the hearth.

Today we visualise his face – a new face – with much more precision. It's cast in silicone, aluminum, and polyurethane resin, or still carved, quite artfully, in wood by traditionalist mask-makers in Austria and Germany. Their craft can be traced to the 1930s, when a new interest in sophisticated mask carving slowly drew the Alpine populace back to a near dead tradition. Growth was slow until the 1990s, when the Internet and other communications technologies brought wider attention and regionalist pride to this highly localised skill. A booming cottage industry of mask- and suit-makers sprang up, and as the work of these artisans was paraded in increasingly large and spectacular processions known as Krampus Runs (*Krampuslauf*), images began to trickle onto English-language websites.


Gruss vom Krampus!

A COTTAGE INDUSTRY OF MASK-MAKERS SPRANG UP

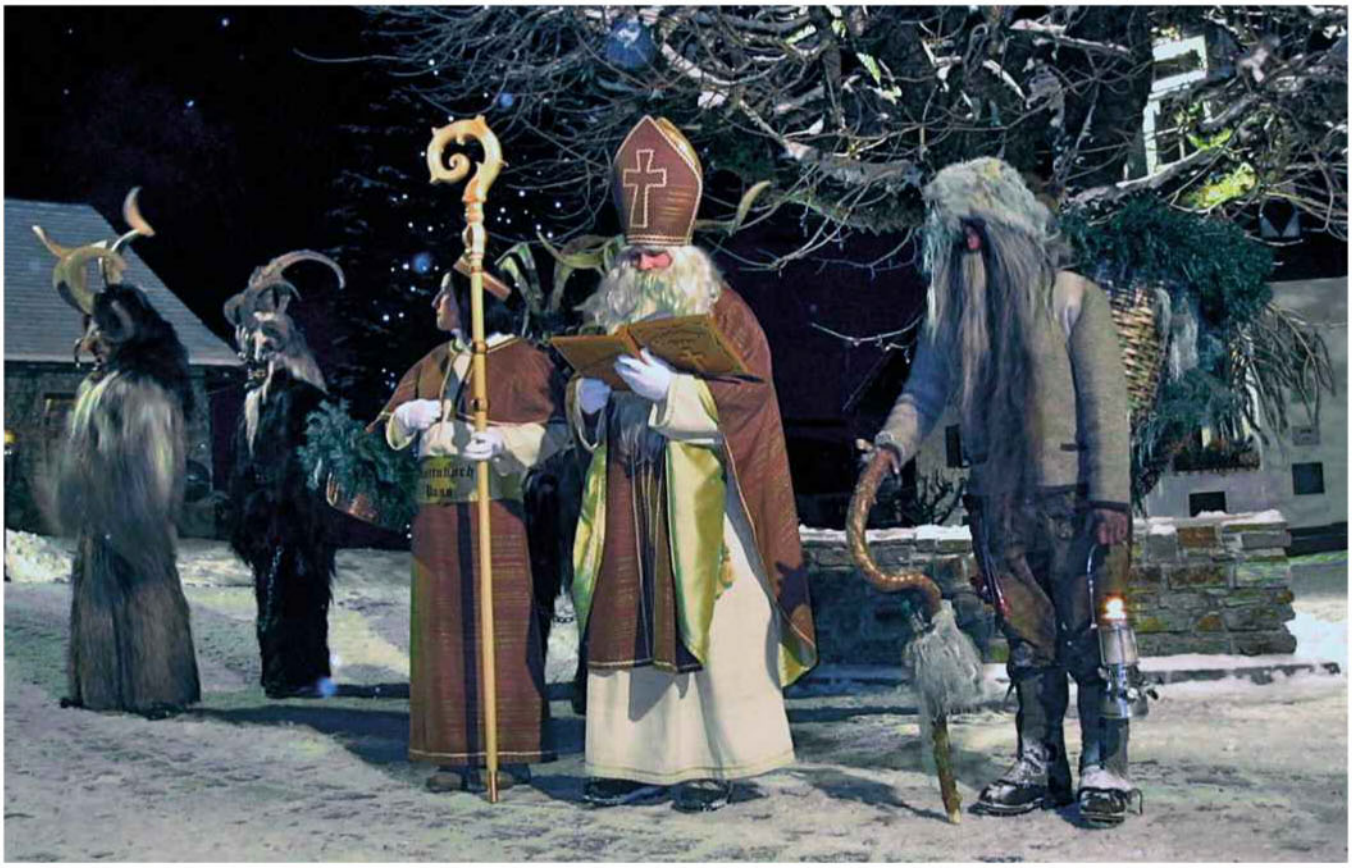
By the mid-2000s, envious DIY costumers in the US, the UK, and even Japan, began cobbling together indigenous versions of the Krampus and holding their own Krampus Runs. The newly globalised Krampus was closer to modern cosplay culture than the old horned barnyard monster or soot-faced devil of the rural Alps.

By Christmas 2015, it seemed all ties with folkloric sources had been cut as the creature was visualised, via clunky animatronics and a dash of CG, in the perfectly dreadful yet mercilessly marketed Universal horror-comedy *Krampus*, a film that mainstreamed the word, though almost nothing of the true folklore. This latest incarnation assimilated the Krampus with the already globalised figure of the American Santa Claus, outfitting him in a sort of red and white Santa uniform.

But even as the Krampus is rendered

ABOVE: A card showing Krampus meting out punishment to a naughty child. **OPPOSITE:** An Austrian Krampus; the folkloric figure's popularity has now spread to America and Britain.

SEAN GALLUP / GETTY IMAGES


AL RIDENOUR

ABOVE: St Nicholas and the rest of a Krampus troupe in Bad Gastein, Austria. **BELOW:** A vintage card showing St Nicholas, Krampus and a sack of children.

precisely with the latest digital technology, we are more confused than ever. Who is he, really? Focusing on his ever-changing mask or physical presentation will not get us far. Better to look for something definitive in his function. At his most basic, he is simply a childhood bogeyman.

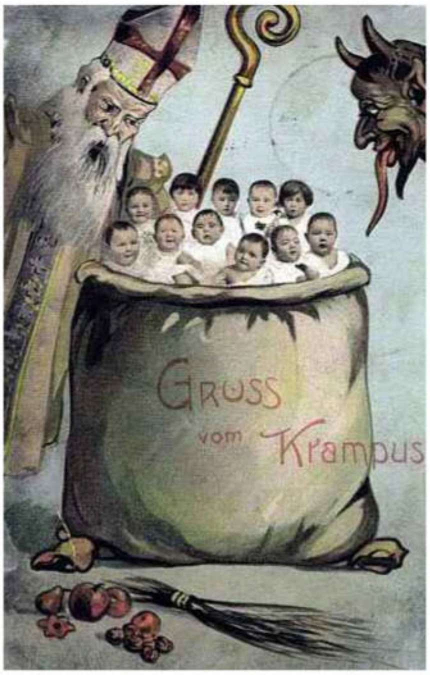
WHAT MAKES A KRAMPUS?

There are plenty of bogeyman in German-speaking culture. The *Sandmann*, of course, menacing children who refuse to go to sleep, but also the *Nachtkrabb* ("Night Raven") and *Nachtbock* ("Night Goat") charged with the same task. The *Popelmann* was eager to drown foolish children who entered swamps to play, and the half-fish *Hakemann* did the same with those who strayed too near the edge of ponds, lakes, or rivers. The list goes on.

What lends the Krampus special status within this motley crew is both his association with a particular date and the folk custom in which he is actually impersonated. While we think of the Krampus as a "Christmas Devil," and Anglo-American Protestants tend to conflate the Santa Claus of 25 December with St Nicholas, it is the Catholic Feast of St Nicholas on 6 December with which the Krampus is associated. He sometimes appears on that day, but more likely the evening before, accompanied by an individual dressed as a bishop representing the saint.

As early as the 17th century, there are reports from Innsbruck of boys in a Jesuit boarding school receiving on St Nicholas Day a visitor costumed as the saint, who along with pious admonitions distributed small treats. This custom, found elsewhere in Austria and Germany, was initially only associated with Church schools of cathedral towns. Eventually, however, it diffused into more rural areas, and mingled with seasonal pagan folk customs.

AT HIS MOST BASIC KRAMPUS IS A CHILDHOOD BOGEYMAN



The traditions into which the costumed Nicholas found his way are not terribly well documented, but could broadly be described as nocturnal visits to homes made by roughly costumed boys and young men said to represent supernatural beings of pagan folklore (more on these later). The often rowdy visitors would arrive unbidden if not unexpected, presumably startling or even intimidating householders and demanding food, drink, or coins. In return, the home was said to receive a symbolic blessing from the spirits, or at least was to be preserved from their malevolent inclinations. To formalise this blessing, certain songs were sung, dances danced, or rhymed verses recited. Under Church influence, these roving troupes eventually incorporated dramatic (and often broadly comic) presentations of biblical stories and saintly legends, particularly those of St Nicholas. In the German-speaking Alps, these came to be known simply as *Nikolausspiele* ("Nicholas Plays").

In one of the short scenes presented, children would be tested on their catechisms, and queried as to their moral conduct by Nicholas. To lend weight to his saintly exhortations, he would call forth a number of threatening devils. The style of costume and provocative antics employed by these devils seems to have been mostly the same employed earlier to simply surprise homeowners (and protect the visitors' anonymity). Horns, which may or may not have been worn before, would now be needed to fit the Church's devilish iconography. Some mischief was still allowed, as long as it was in the service of godly instruction, and the comic and frightening antics of these devils became the most popular element of the Nicholas Plays. By the early 20th century, these figures – usually called simply by various German dialect words for "devil" – had also acquired a strange new moniker: "Krampus". Around this time, the production of complete Nicholas Plays in a village square or other communal space was on the decline, while the beloved devils-and-gifting scene survived as a private St Nicholas Eve entertainment held in private homes.

Today, in Alpine areas where the tradition is most reverently preserved, particularly the Pinzgau and Pongau regions south of Salzburg, rhymed greetings and proclamations recited by Nicholas as he enters homes still contain bits and pieces of dialogue from the old Nicholas Plays. The saint is typically accompanied by perhaps a half dozen Krampuses, as well as auxiliary figures: costumed female angels and a rustically clad basket-carrier, all of whom assist in transporting the treats that are handed out.

ON THE STREETS, IN THE HOME

In the most actively traditional areas, families, usually seated around a communal kitchen table, may await the visit of a dozen or more of these troupes throughout the evening. The challenge each St Nicholas presents to the children is today less often a test of catechism but instead the recitation of some memorised seasonal poem or performance of a much-rehearsed musical piece. This is followed by the entrance of the Krampuses and their wild, switch-swinging rumpus, during which children, while frightened, are rarely actually struck. Older teens and adults, however, can expect a bit more in the way of playful aggression.

This custom – known as the *Hausbesuch* ("house visit") – is the historic heart of the Krampus tradition. However, it's slowly being supplanted by the more public spectacle of the *Krampuslauf*. Originally, the presence of Krampuses on a town's streets was only the result of troupes traversing an area en route to homes. Adults encountering them along the way could expect to receive a few playful blows, understood here merely as a sportive gesture rather than anything to do with Christian discipline.

In more traditionalist areas, what might be called a *Krampuslauf* is still a matter of troupes rather randomly crisscrossing streets; but in urban areas, where homes are too numerous and too widely scattered for house-visits, the only encounter one might have with a Krampus is often at a *Lauf*, in which orderly parading troupes are now frequently separated from spectators by safety barricades. While a St Nicholas usually accompanies each troupe, his role is only a symbolic vestige of the *Hausbesuch*.

THE PAGAN PERCHTEN

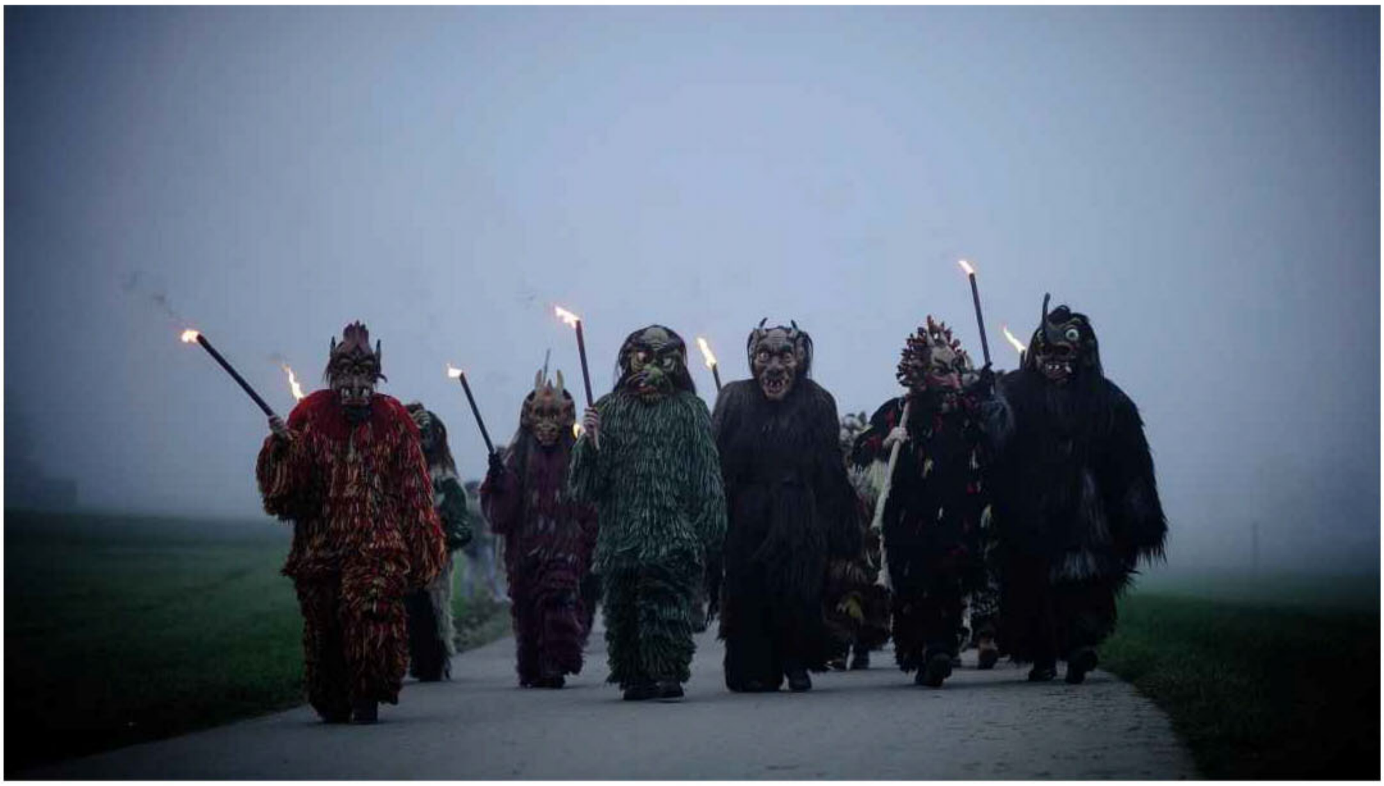
So, this is the Christian side of the story – but what of those rowdy pagan boys who grew up to be fine Krampuses? There are many threads to trace here, but the strongest identifies them as *Perchten* (singular: "*Percht*"), an amorphous sort of Alpine spirit believed to possess frightful powers both good and evil, although more commonly the latter. The word *Percht* is not only a class of spirits, but may function as a proper name of a singular supernatural being. The individual embodiment is represented as female, usually a sort of cronish ogress, but also sometimes more protective and matronly. She is known variously as Frau Perchta, Berchta, Perahta, or Berahta. The name is derived from the Old High German *giberahta* – meaning "manifestation", "shining forth", or "epiphany", and like the *Perchten* as a class, she is associated with the Twelve Nights of

TRIBP VIA FLICKR / CREATIVE COMMONS

JOHANNES SIMON / GETTY IMAGES

TOP: A typically terrifying modern Krampus spotted at Munich Christkindlmarkt. **ABOVE:** Woodcarver Richard Kranawetvogl starts to carve a Krampus mask in his workshop in Marktschellenberg, Germany. Kranawetvogl specialises in the fearsome masks and makes them for local Krampus associations.

SEAN GALLUP / GETTY IMAGES

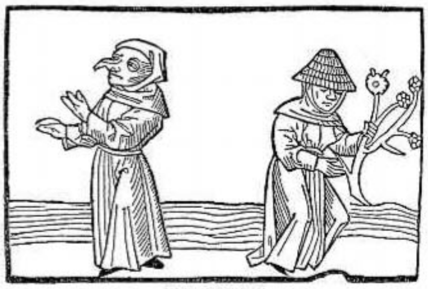


BOTH PHOTOS: PHILIPP GUELLAND / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: People dressed as *Perchten* roam village streets in the annual *Perchten* gathering near Kirchseeon, Bavaria. **BELOW:** A *Percht* wearing bells to chase off evil Winter spirits. **BELOW:** Frau Perchta in an old German woodcut. **FACING PAGE:** Krampus night participants get into costume in Neustift im Stubaital in the Austrian Tyrol.

Christmas, most strongly with Epiphany Eve or Twelfth Night (5 January).

It was on this night that Frau Perchta was said to visit homes to ensure they were properly maintained and particularly that the young women involved in spinning (usually flax) had completed this seasonal chore by that night. Spinning found incomplete or sloppily executed would be destroyed, and those who had failed to maintain domestic order would be punished. Perchta was notoriously effective here, her classic punishment being the disembowelling of the unworthy with knife or sickle. But it did not end there. The gutting was followed by a grotesque bit of DIY taxidermy – namely stuffing the cavity with straw, snow, rocks, or other debris, and sewing it up with an iron needle. Sometimes she was even said to wind any surplus intestines around the spinner's distaff!



The parallel with the Nicholas-Krampus visits as a seasonal mechanism for enforcing domestic order is clear. Though not extensively documented, there are reports of costumed visits by the *Percht* or Frau Perchta resembling the Krampus *Hausbesuch*. In 19th-century Middle Franconia, for instance, we read of a figure identified as "Perchta of the Iron Nose" disguised in hides and horns and frightening or rewarding children as was their due. Reports from Oberhausen, Bavaria, mention a soot-blackened *Butzabercht* ("bogey-Percht") fulfilling similar duties, this time even paired with a Nicholas ("Kläs").

CARNIVAL SPIRITS

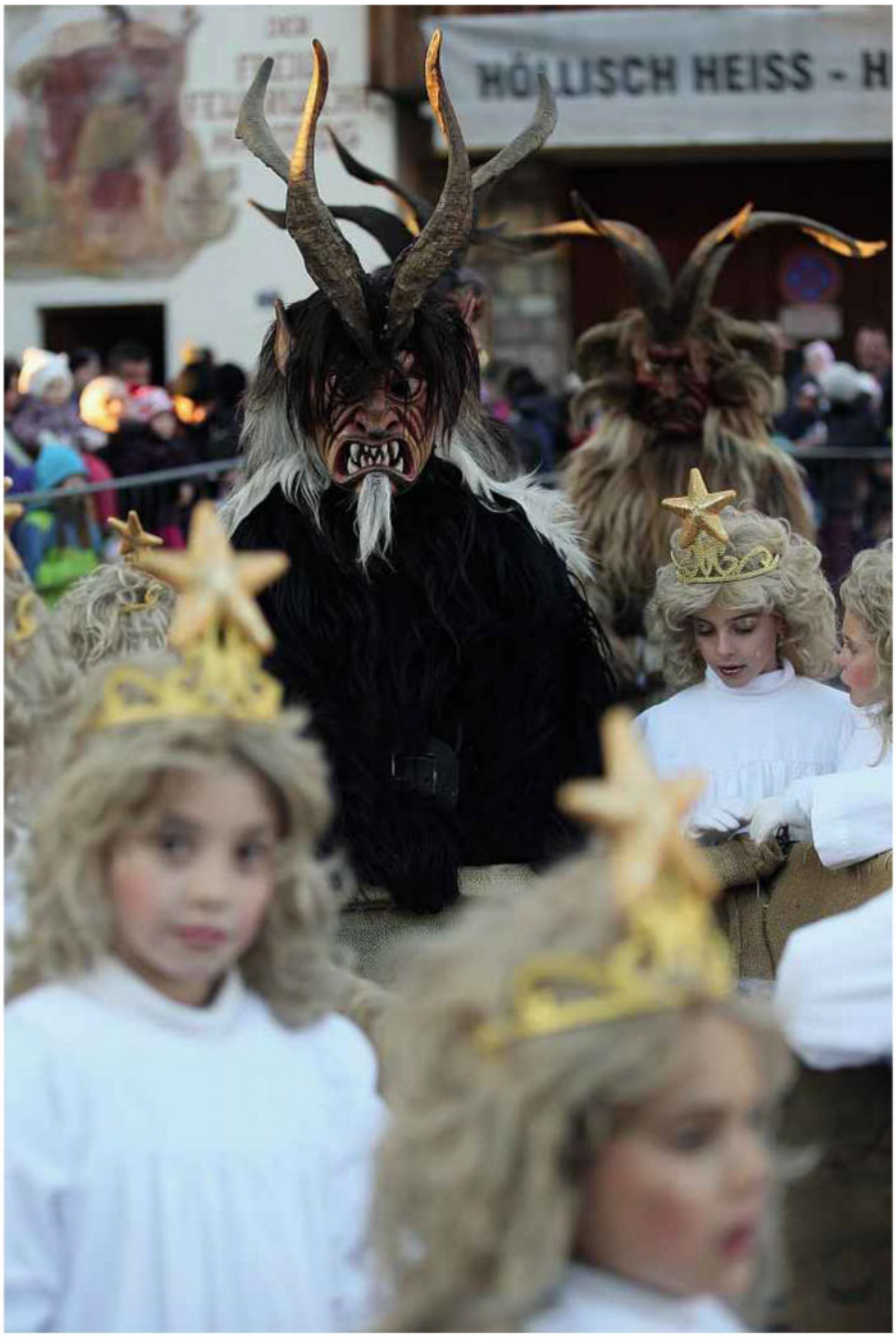
While these instances present a singular figure, it's more common to hear of multitudes of *Perchten* gathered for a *Perchtenlauf*. These events still take place throughout Austria and Bavaria, usually sometime near Epiphany. Fed by the same trends that fired the *Krampuslauf* revival, the contemporary *Perchtenlauf* is all but identical to the *Krampuslauf* but for the absence of St Nicholas and subtle differences in costumes: e.g., more horns (according to some) worn by the *Percht*.

Most of the *Perchten* runs today only date back to the mid or late 20th century and don't really reflect any earlier historic reality. Exceptions to this are those first held in the mid 1800s in Bad Gastein and nearby towns of Austria's Pongau region. Here one finds a few representatives of the Krampus-like *Percht* seen in modern runs, but the vast majority of figures – such as the *Kappenträger* ("cap wearers") whose highly decorated headpieces can tower up to 8ft (2.4m) or more – seem to draw more heavily on Venetian carnival tradition than imagery from local folklore. A connection to the *Perchten* mythology, however, is maintained in the notion that a dance executed by these festively attired performers outside homes, if appropriately received, brings blessings or protection in the coming year.

This older style of *Perchtenlauf* offers a window into the late 1700s or early 1800s, when the Nicholas Plays had freed themselves from Church control and begun to absorb secular influences such as those from Venice. Figures assimilated into Gastein's *Perchtenlauf*, such as clowns and caricatures of travelling tradesmen familiar along Alpine trading routes to Italy, clearly mimic the traditional buffoonery of Carnival. Nearly identical characters appeared in short comic segments sandwiched between biblical and saintly stories presented in the Nicholas Plays.

As an outlet for peasant humour, some of these could be delightfully coarse, such as this rather extreme example from a play once presented in Donnersbach: A crooked horse trader tries to sell a broken down nag (a pantomime horse). When it proves too sick, an enema is administered as a tonic. When this fails, the animal's head is chopped off. Both actions serve as excuses to spray the unsuspecting audience with horse fluids.

Theatrical decapitations in Nicholas Plays were actually not uncommon, but were generally performed by a Grim Reaper encountering unrepentant sinners. Another character, sometimes seen in the few plays still presented, is the soot-covered Blacksmith who would creep unseen through the audience attempting to nail spectators' shoes to the floor. Similar harassment of spectators is still carried out by a type of *Percht* known as a *Habergeiss* – a sort of monstrous demon goat represented by a performer draped in hides extending a carved wooden head with mechanical jaw before him. The snapping jaw is particularly effective for stealing hats from the heads of spectators.



SEAN GALLUP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Members of the Haiminger Krampusgruppe watch as little girls dressed as angels distribute sweets prior to the annual Krampus night in Haiming, Austria.

LOST SOULS, WITCHES AND KNOCKING GHOSTS

But the world that spawned the Krampus was hardly one big boisterous carnival. In Austria and Germany (as well as elsewhere in Central Europe), the Twelve Nights were also said to be a time when the dead reappeared, moving through the skies or over the land in large phantom hordes. These apparitions were said to consist of those who had died before their appointed time, in battle, while away on a journey, unbaptised, or without proper burial.

Frau Perchta, in her more benevolent aspect, was given particular charge over some of these spirits, namely infants who had died before baptism. In folk tales, she often appears on winter nights surrounded by these ghosts known as the *Heimchen*. Frau Holda or Holle, Perchta's equivalent further north in Germany, was often identified as the leader of the Wild Hunt, an appellation used by folklorists to describe any number of phantom hordes strongly associated with the Twelve Nights. Like the huntress goddess Diana, with whom she was also equated, Holda often appeared in the company of ghostly hunting dogs, and their mournful barking was often said to herald the appearance of the Wild Hunt. The Church regarded both Holda and Diana as witches, and increasingly, under this influence, the spirits of the Wild Hunt came to be regarded not merely as unfortunates, but as unholy, the damned, or as actual demons.

The figure of La Befana, a witch associated with Epiphany in Italy, is still part of contemporary holiday tradition in many areas of the country. Much more widely known than her Austrian cousin Perchta, she is today a slightly diminished figure, unthreatening and grandmotherly. However, in 1835, when Jacob Grimm wrote his *Teutonic Mythology,* he refers to her as a "misshapen fairy" describing her as "black and ugly". This darker aspect of Befana is preserved in the Tuscan town of Barga, the "City of Befana," where a costumed figure representing the witch makes her rounds accompanied by figures dressed in peasant clothes of centuries gone by. They are the *befanotti*, understood to represent the spirits of departed ancestors, following Befana on Epiphany Eve, much as the ghosts of the Wild Hunt follow Holda or the *Heimchen* Perchta.

Though it has largely now lost its association with the dead, a related tradition once common in Germany and Austria (and now surviving mainly in the Austrian state of Tyrol) is that of the "Knocking Nights" (*Anklopfnächte*). While it's now regarded as little more than a form of Christmas carolling, the origins of the custom lie in a peculiar superstition, one of many oracular practices once associated with the season

SEAN GALLUP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Krampuses walk the streets of Neustift im Stubaital, Austria, in search of delinquent children during Krampus night 2013.
BELOW: A member of the Koatlacker devil's association (Koatlacker Tuifl) takes part in a Krampus procession in Prad near Merano, in the South Tyrol region of northern Italy.

in these regions. The name originates with a 16th-century practice of knocking on the walls of barns where livestock slept, thus provoking the animals to vocalise. In these noises, it was said, one could pick out the names of those in the village who would die within the coming year. At some point, the bands of youths roaming from barn to barn themselves came to impersonate the restless spirits. The mischievous "ghosts" would visit houses, knock on doors and windows, then quickly hide themselves before they could be caught. As the practice was institutionalised, these visits from the dead were said to bring luck to the home and occupants, and as with the *Perchten* traditions, with which the *Anklopfnächte* once likely overlapped, this blessing was formalised with the performance of particular songs.

SOMETHING DEAD, SOMETHING BORN

Given the connection between the dead and Frau Perchta, as well her regional equivalents Holda and Befana, it seems probable that the *Perchten*, though imagined in demonic terms by the Church, were once simply the wandering ghosts of the dead. And the Krampus? The same might be said of him, as hinted at by the etymology of his name, which many scholars derive from the Bavarian "*Krampn*", used to refer to something dried out, shrivelled – or dead.

So there you have it. Devils, witches, ghosts, and the dead: more than enough to spoil your aunt's annual holiday party. However unsettling these elements of the old Christmas may be, they are indeed deeply traditional, more so than the holiday we celebrate today. Reconnecting with this history is sparking an enthusiastic revival. Roughly two-dozen American cities now hold Krampus runs, including one started in Portland, Oregon, back in 2010, and one I've directed in Los Angeles since 2013. Krampus has also come to the UK, beginning with the Whitby Krampus Run in 2015, which this year expands to York. In a small way at least, Christmas in the English-speaking world seems to be changing, making a bit more room for the darkness; which for some, at least, can only make the holiday shine more brightly. FT

JOHANNES SIMON / GETTY IMAGES

AUTHOR BIO

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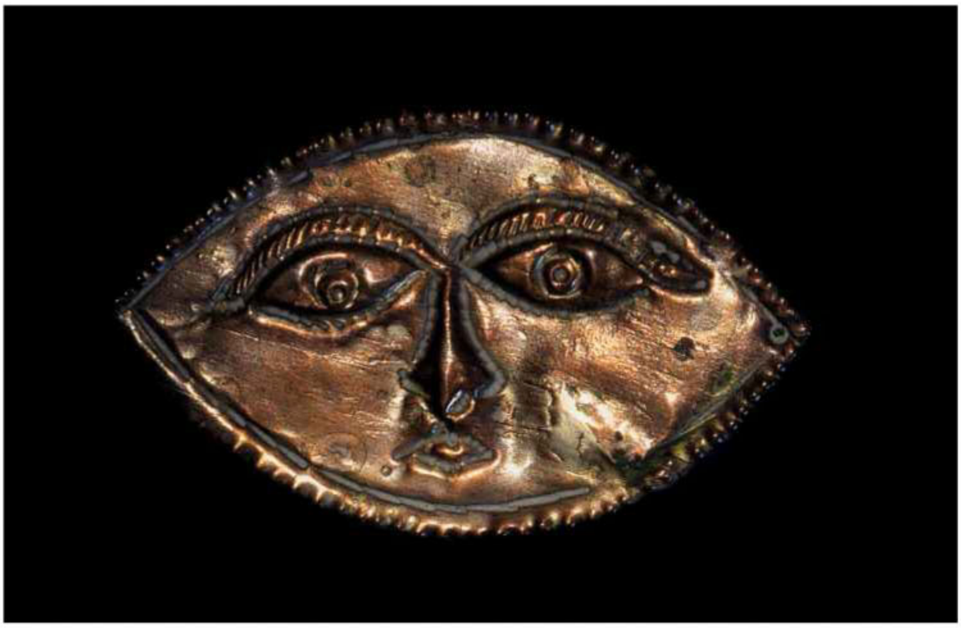
The Krampus: Roots and Rebirth of the Folkloric Devil is published by Feral House and is available from Amazon.co.uk for £15.99.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

In an extract from a new book celebrating the history of Boscastle's Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, **PROFESSOR RONALD HUTTON** introduces the photographs of **SARA HANNANT**, which aim to bring a range of enigmatic objects from the museum's unique collection to life.



Until recently, historians generally neglected material objects as evidence for what we could know about the past, leaving them to archæologists, while archæologists preferred to concentrate on more remote periods, and above all the ancient world and prehistory, where they were either dominant or wholly in charge. Neither had a lot of time for writing about magic, which was viewed as both an obscure and a trivial branch of human activity, and especially so if continued into modern times, when most scholars thought that people should really have got over it. All this consigned the material remains of modern magic to the ultimate periphery of interest for serious scholars. This situation has, however, altered almost beyond recognition in recent years, so that in 2015 alone no fewer than four different collections of scholarly essays were in press, all intended to impress academic as well as general readers and all dedicated to the material evidence for magical activity. Some had a global scope, and some covered the period from ancient times to the present, but all included modern European evidence and all made the point that to study the materiality of magic is now considered to be a thoroughly good thing.

> TO STUDY THE MATERIALITY OF MAGIC IS NOW CONSIDERED A GOOD THING

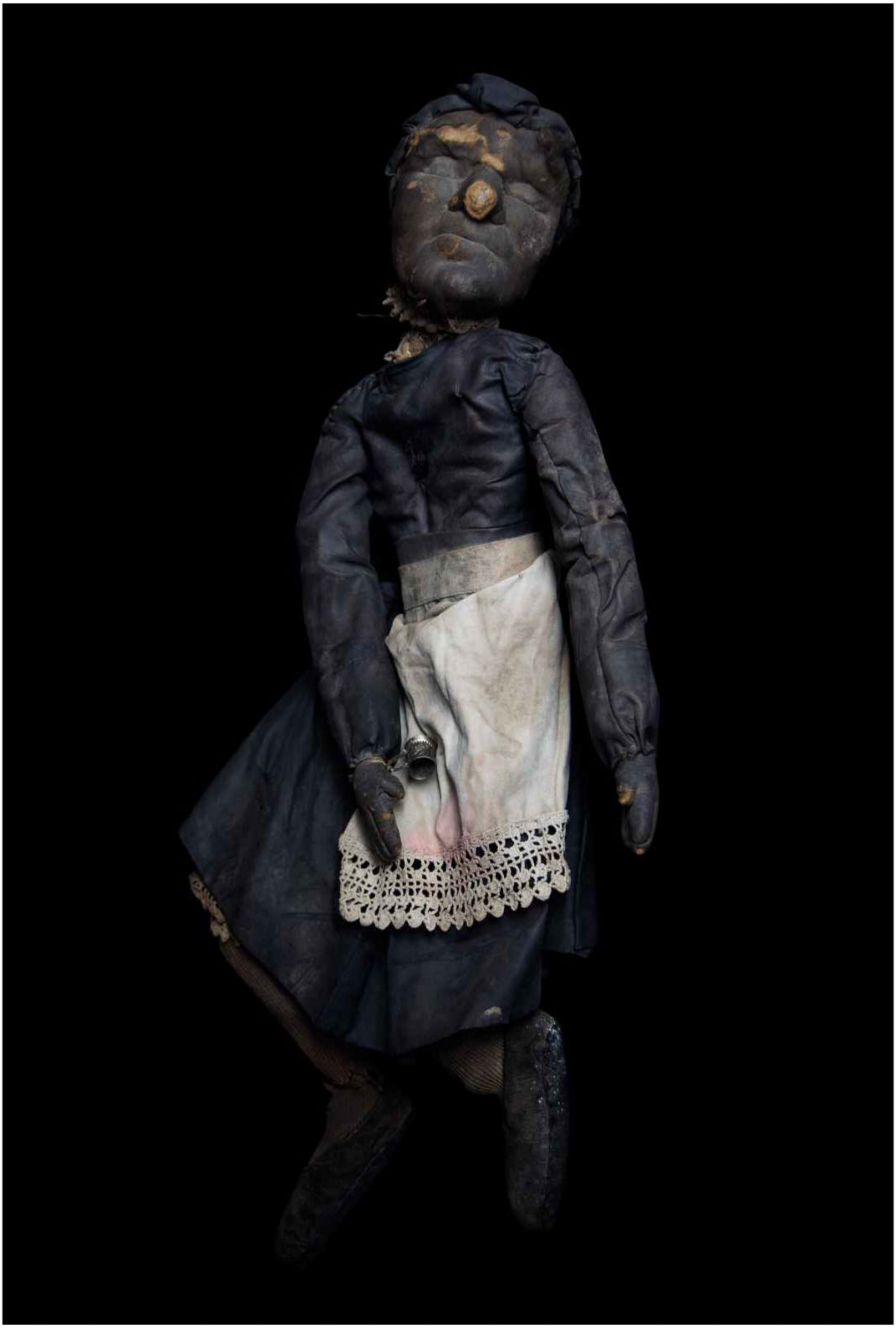
So why the change, and why has it happened now? In part it can be put down to

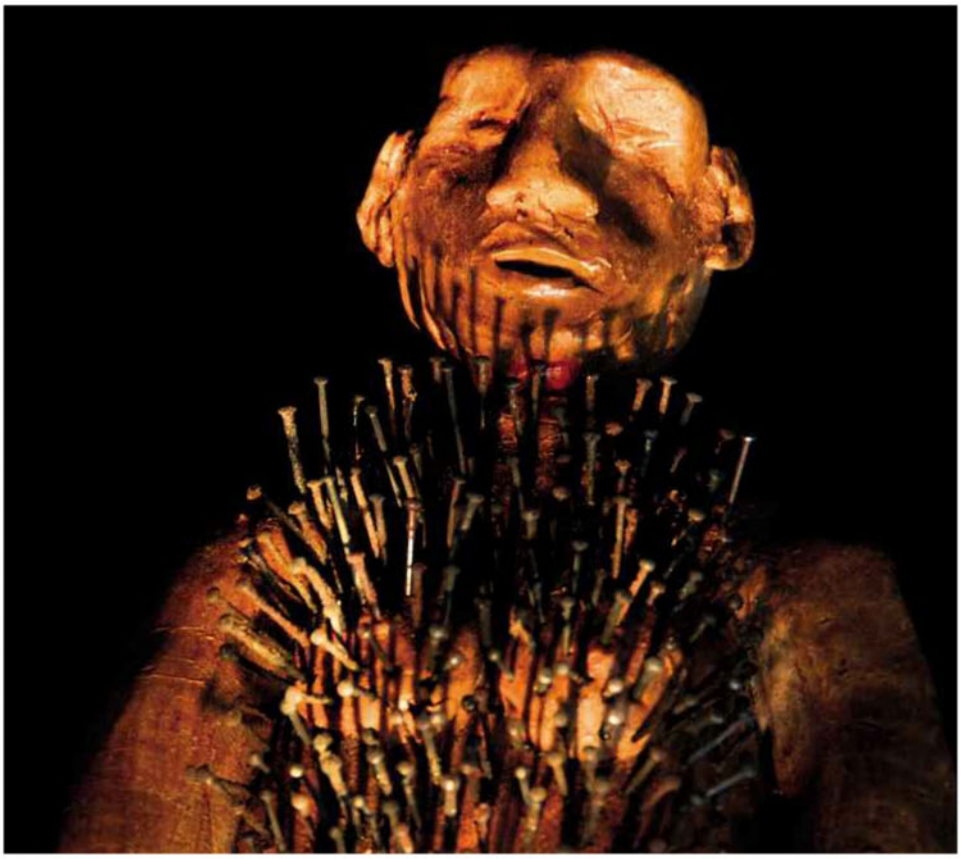
MOON TALISMAN (left)

This Moon talisman belonged to Gerald Gardner, founder of Wicca. Gerald met Cecil Williamson in 1946 and they became friends and business partners, Cecil employing Gerald as 'resident witch' at the Witches' Mill when the Folklore Centre of Superstition and Witchcraft first opened on the Isle of Man in 1951. Over the years, however, their friendship deteriorated. In 1954 Cecil moved his collection back to England and sold the Witches' Mill to Gerald who henceforth displayed his own artefacts. When Gerald died, he left his collection to High Priestess Monique Wilson, who ran the museum for several years then sold the entire collection to Ripley's Believe It Or Not!, whereupon the items were divided between museums in Gatlinburg and San Francisco. When both museums closed in 1985, the artefacts were sold at auction. Many years later Mark Sosnowski, a witch living in New York, purchased 39 of these items on eBay and donated them to the Museum of Witchcraft in 2012. Rumours circulated that Cecil had cursed Gerald's collection, so a suitable ritual was performed to release the artefacts and allow them to be displayed. Documentation supplied by Ripley's describes this object as 'a silver moon talisman... used by a witch, circa 1740'. However, it is thought most probable that Gerald made it himself.

CHIMNEY DOLL (right)

This doll was found in the chimney of a cottage in Padstow, Cornwall, in the 1990s. However, during the 1950s she was the 'guardian' of the Hole in the Wall public house in Bodmin, and known as Mother Shipton, after the Yorkshire prophetess. There is much speculation as to the identity of the original Mother Shipton, but according to a chapbook of her prophecies published in 1641, she was born Ursula Southeil in 1488 in Knaresborough, Yorkshire. Legend has it that her 15-year-old mother Agatha gave birth to Ursula in a cave during a terrible storm on the banks of the River Nidd. From a young age, Ursula possessed a rare gift to tell the future. Throughout her life she is alleged to have made a series of startling predictions, including the advent of cars, iron ships and even the end of the world.





professional developments, the creation of an unprecedentedly large number of academic scholars in the Western world, with an unprecedented pressure upon them to carry out research and publication as rapidly and amply as possible. This has naturally pushed historians and archæologists into a scramble for new source material and new subjects, in order to survive. It may also, however, be attributed to two much wider cultural phenomena. One is a new sense of material objects as personalities, with life cycles and biographies; another is a sense of them as texts, which can be read, and can deliver arguments, claims and stories even as the written word can do. Another is a diminishing fear of the supernatural, whether embodied in established religions or in the presumed actions of spells, charms and curses. The greatest threats to human existence are now perceived neither to be the anger of deities nor the caprices of an all-powerful natural world, but the consequence of ill-judged human action. This shift produces a willingness to probe the cosmos more deeply and understand it better, in order to find a place for ourselves within it which is both as comfortable and as sustainable as possible. At the same time, it diminishes traditional fears of transgression in considering ways of knowing the Universe, and of working with it, to bring all past forms of knowledge and operation under fresh scrutiny. The great mysteries of existence – the fate of the individual personality on death, the extent and nature of the Universe, and the possibility of a supreme intelligence or intelligences operating in its affairs – remain unsolved. We confront them, however, with a new globalisation of knowledge and sense of human freedom and potential; and with those, the figure of the magician increasingly takes its place alongside those of the spiritual leader, poet, storyteller, artist, scientist and politician as an expression of that sense.

This is the context, and the time, which is so appropriate for the emergence of the book from which these images come. It is in part a tribute

NAIL MAN POPPET (left)

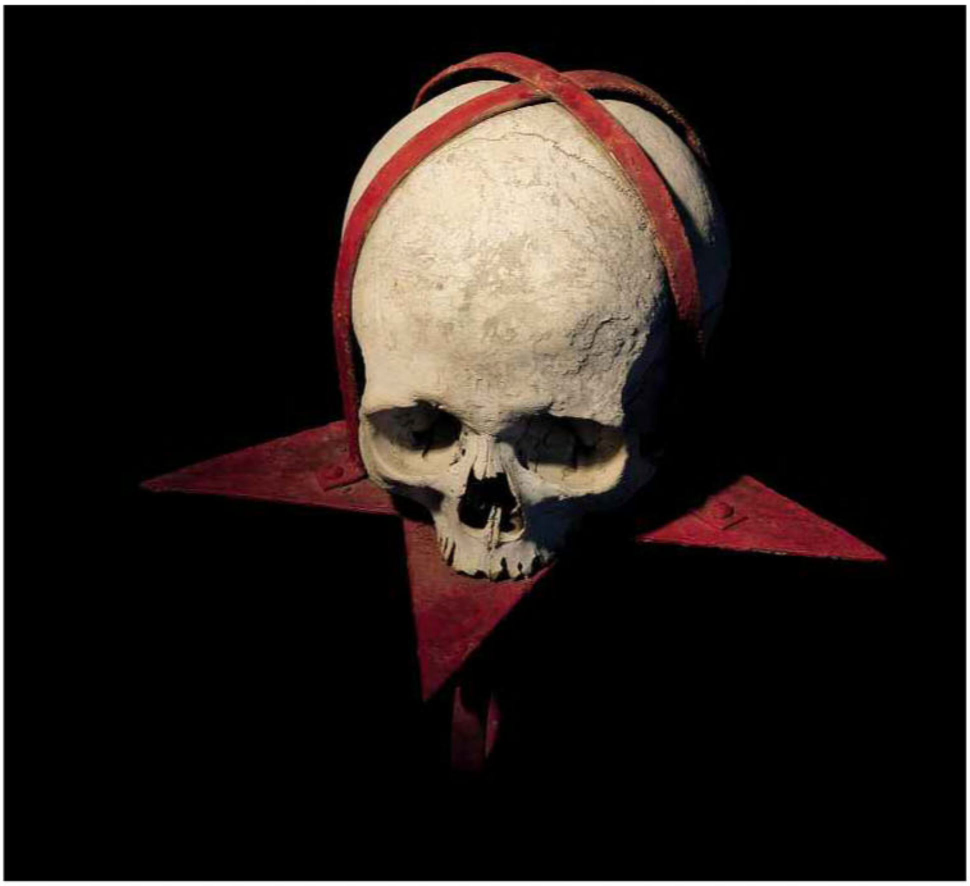
The making of effigies for positive or negative effect is ancient and international. The word poppet is an older spelling of puppet from the Middle English *popet*, meaning a small child or doll. In folk magic and witchcraft a poppet is a doll made to represent an individual, and used for casting spells on that person or assisting them through magic. Potency is thought to be enhanced if the poppet is given the person's name or incorporates his or her blood, nail clippings, hair or clothing. The violent insertion of iron nails into this figure implies the maker's intention to inflict suffering on the person. Cecil Williamson describes the object thus: 'Male figure heavily stuck with pins from a French source made by a woman to be revenged upon a restaurant proprietor who had caused her daughter's pregnancy.'

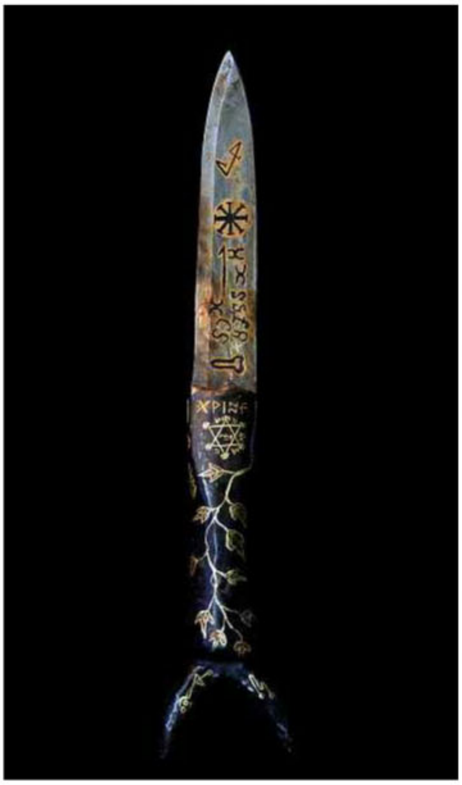
CRYSTAL BALL (left)

The crystal ball is one of the most ubiquitous aids to clairvoyance and spirit summoning. Scrying with translucent material is an ancient practice. The scryer assumes a mild self-induced trance, fixing his or her gaze upon the ball, on which images can appear. These images may refer to the past, present or future in chronological order or in disconnected scenes. Another property of the crystal ball is that if one looks through it, it is possible to see the world upside down, which contributes to its magical significance. This crystal ball belonged to Cecil Williamson who asserted: 'If you really must understand this world, first you must stand upon your head.'

MUMMIFIED CATS (right)

These mummified cats, one black and one red, were found by a builder in 2008, located together below the front door in a Victorian house in Bristol. Corpses of cats are often found concealed in cavities or bricked up in walls of old buildings. Sometimes they are arranged in lifelike poses, even holding a rat or mouse. Traditionally this was done to scare away vermin, just as dead vermin would be hung over the barn door to 'warn others'. This form of folk magic is defined as apotropaic, meaning to turn away evil. Wards such as these were also thought to repel witches and their familiars.





to a remarkable collection, that of the Museum of Witchcraft at Boscastle, which has in turn been the creation of two remarkable men, Cecil Williamson and Graham King, now succeeded by a third, Simon Costin. Their labours, supported by Graham's team of volunteers, have built up the most coherent and comprehensive collection of objects related to the (mostly modern) practice of magic in the nation.

There is another kind of magic woven into the book: that of the photographer Sara Hannant. Her decision to make images against a black background instead of the accustomed white automatically changed the priorities of representation in the recording and publication of a collection. Hitherto the general purpose of such an exercise has literally been to illuminate: to expose the objects concerned with the utmost clarity and so enable a recognition, and an understanding, of them to best effect. Sara's pictures are rites of evocation, which recognise the essentially enigmatic and secretive nature of most of what is displayed and call forth the character of each thing represented in the manner of an artist – or a ceremonial magician. Our ultimate lack of solid evidence for the provenance and purpose of so many of them only enhances their intrinsic power as characters in their own right, with their potential to reach out to the observer as an individual, and to inspire, repel, intrigue and provoke. As a result, this is not merely a record of a unique collection and institution, but embodies a radically new and exciting approach to the work of representing the past to the present. **FT**

OF SHADOWS: ONE HUNDRED OBJECTS FROM THE MUSEUM OF WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC by Sara Hannant and Simon Costin is published by Strange Attractor Press at £25 paperback and £35 limited edition hardback. www.strangeattractor.co.uk

SKULL USED FOR RITUAL MAGIC (left)

Cecil Williamson: "This iron strapped human skull, secure on its star-shaped stand, has been with me for over 40 years. It came from a witch or wise woman living in the North Bovey area, and she kept 'her friend' as she called this relic in a secret place upon Easdon Tor. Old Granny Mann always used to say when presented with a problem or a situation by her clients, 'Well me dear, I don't rightly knows what I 'a' do – till I have asked me friend. I'll let thee know later.'"

Occultists sometimes use a skull as a device into which the spirit of the deceased can be called back from the Otherworld. Believed by some to contain surviving traces of the life force, many witches and magicians look upon the skull as a symbol of death and rebirth, which can aid magical workings and communication with the ancestors.

BROWNIE PATE'S ATHAME (left)

Cecil Williamson gave this athame to a witch friend, Brownie Pate, who kept it with her skull 'Henry'. The Athame has an embellished hilt made of black paper-mache, layered with gold-painted sigils. An athame is a black-handled blade used by many modern witches as a working tool. The athame is not used for cutting but for casting the circle and directing energy during a ritual. In Wicca, the athame most commonly represents the element of fire, and is one of the four elemental tools, the others being the wand, pentacle and chalice.

BAPHOMET (right)

In 1960, when Cecil Williamson first opened the museum, he arranged this life-size goat-headed figure on a throne, with a mannequin of a young witch at his feet offering up a baby. Graham King, museum owner and curator from 1996-2013, removed the tableaux and changed the Horned God figure to represent Baphomet, the alleged deity of the Knights Templar. The velvet robe, edged with fake fur, belonged to the late magical practitioner Chris Gosselin. As High Priest, Chris would sometimes assume the role of the Horned God during rituals wearing this robe and a horned mask.

THE FACE IN THE WINDOW

WINDOWPANE GHOSTS AND LIGHTNING DAGUERREOTYPES

One of the most fortean of lightning phenomena is the "lightning daguerreotype," where a face or figure, often recognised as a particular deceased person, is mysteriously etched upon a windowpane. **CHRIS WOODYARD** traces some of the fenestral flaps of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In 1871, something peculiar was happening in Sandusky, Ohio. Faces – mystic, photographic portraits – began to appear on windows. They had a vague, shadowy quality, as if a ghost had pressed its face against the glass. Some windows had only one, others a dozen or more.

While it was the age of progress in industry and science, it was also the heyday of Spiritualism. All over America, people were earnestly receiving messages rapped out by the dead, and watching ghostly figures emerge from mediums' cabinets. There was optimism among scientists and Spiritualists alike that soon the mysteries of the World Beyond would be revealed. It was into this fevered atmosphere that the miraculous images of Sandusky came.

OHIO'S FENESTRAL FLAP

Charles Fort in his book *Wild Talents* discusses historic tales of crosses and death's heads appearing in 1872 on European windows during the Franco-Prussian War and mentions reports of faces from Massachusetts and Ohio. Fort suggested that the origin of these stories lay in the rise of spirit photography and wondered if the human imagination could affect a photographic plate.[1]

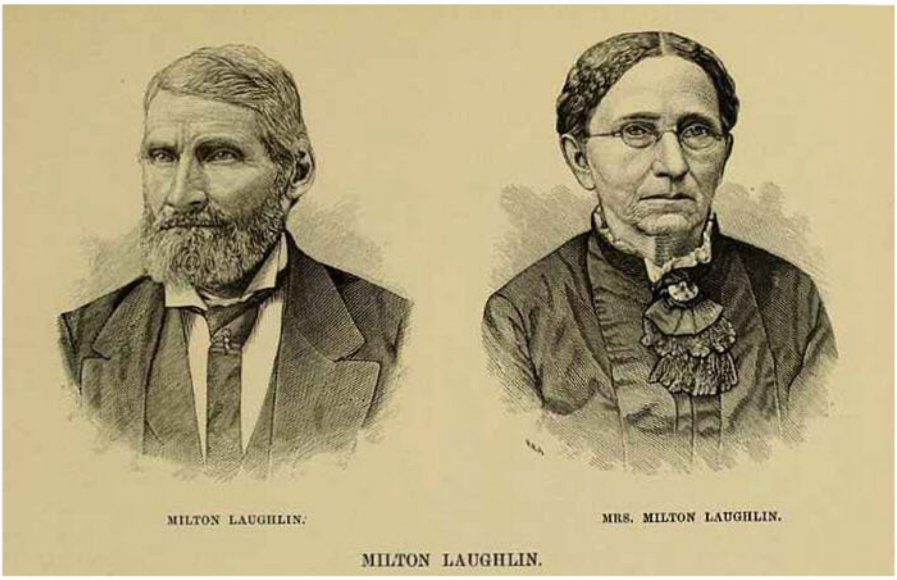
The daguerreotype photographic process was invented in 1839. It must be remembered that until about 1860, other than drawings and paintings, images printed on or preserved behind glass plates – ambrotypes and daguerreotypes – offered the only way to create portraits. Pictures on glass were etched, as it were, into the public consciousness.

ABOVE: Sandusky, Ohio, location for the start of a fenestral flap tha spread across the state in 1871.

> "THE OBJECT WAS THE IMAGE OF THE YOUNG LADY'S FACE"

The opening salvo in this fenestral flap came in January of 1871. An image appeared in a window in the third storey of the Lake House hotel in Sandusky.

"The object was found to be the image, or rather a photograph, of the young lady's face impressed on the glass, and so distinctly as to be recognized by all who had seen the original, as that of a young lady by the name of Lula Thayer… who… was in the habit of sitting at the window for hours at a time, looking out upon the street, and the photograph so represents her. The image is so perfect and distinct as to be visible at a distance of several rods in a moderate sunlight. That it is nothing more nor less than a photograph, the result of moisture, light and chemical action, there can be no doubt. It was so pronounced by the artist, Mr Epler [a local photographer], and others who made a close examination. The image is not visible from the inside of the window, though quite distinct to the eye at a distance of not more than a foot on the outside. It cannot be rubbed off, as was thoroughly tested by several. It was also found that the placing a black cloth back of the pane increased its distinctness very materially. All these facts


MILTON LAUGHLIN.
MRS. MILTON LAUGHLIN.
MILTON LAUGHLIN.

LEFT: Mr. and Mrs Milton Laughlin, in the window of whose Berlin Heights home appeared the face of Spiritualist Hardin A Tucker. **BELOW:** The window-ghost at Widow Jorgensen's house at 2119 Mason Street in San Francisco.

clearly prove that it is a genuine photograph, though taken by nature and without the aid of the artist…”[2]

This face bore the hallmarks of the classic face-in-the-window phenomenon: a sudden appearance, visible only from the outside,[3] apparently embedded in the glass, and resistant to cleaning.

In the next few months many other images were reported across northern Ohio, including a middle-aged man with whiskers, three females and a reclining man, a “negro woman” in a cap, and George Washington.[4]

Images were also seen in Wadsworth, Sharon, Ashtabula, Plymouth (where, unusually, the image was that of a cat), and North Fairfield, Ohio. The *New York Times* reported: “On one window of a single saw-mill in North Fairfield, Huron County, Ohio, [a witness] has discovered no less than 12 of these pictures, representing every variety of sex, species, and condition of life.”[5]

The face of local Spiritualist Hardin A Tucker, found on a pane of glass in Berlin Heights, Ohio, was interpreted as testifying to the truth of life after death. Shortly before Tucker died he told Mrs Laughlin, a neighbour who considered Spiritualism a delusion, that “it was useless for them to argue longer, but he should soon discover the truthfulness of his belief, and if he found it possible he would return and compel her to believe.

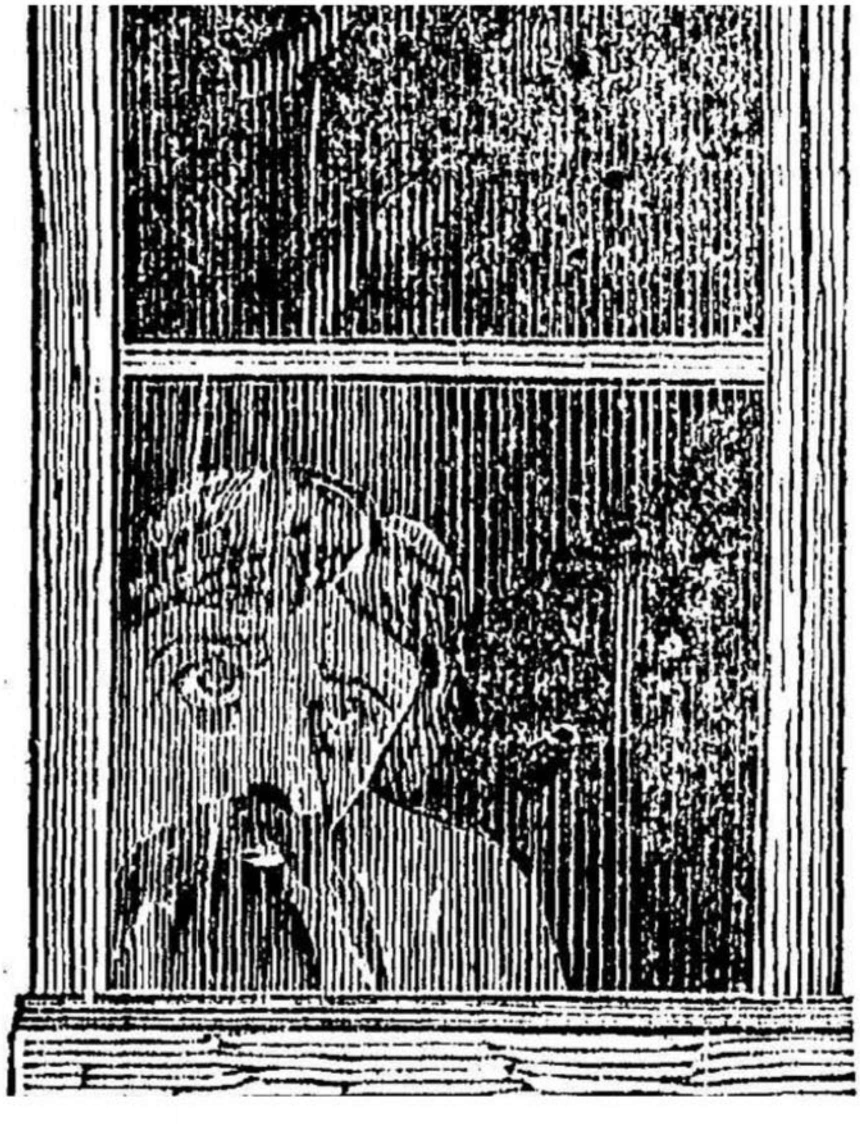
“Said Mrs Laughlin, ‘As I was sitting in the kitchen one evening, in last April, alone, a sudden impulse made me look up at the window. There I saw the face of Mr Tucker looking at me. I was terribly frightened, and yet I continued to look. I should think I steadily looked at him for half-an-hour. When I moved it grew indistinct, and I gained courage to take the lamp and leave the room’.”[6]

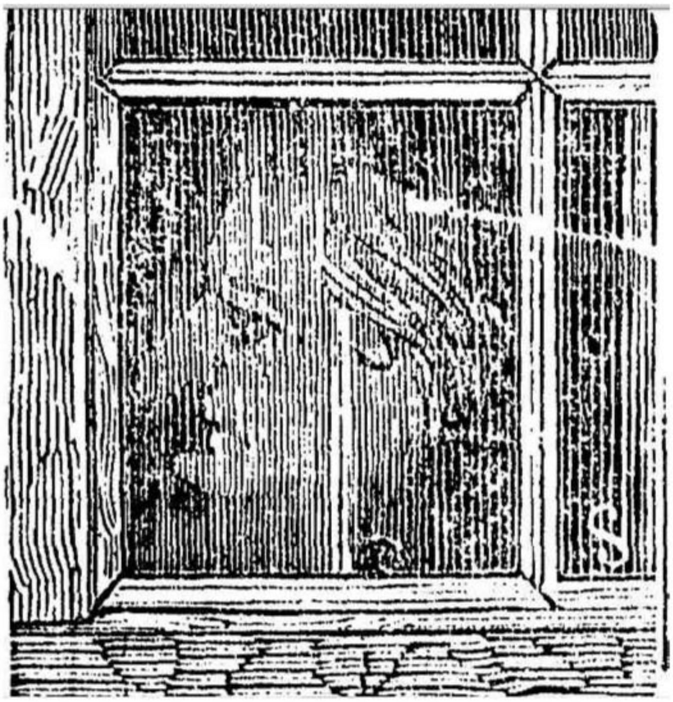
The northern Ohio flap faded by 1874, but new faces emerged elsewhere in Ohio, in Columbus, Eaton, Cincinnati, and Portsmouth. In Portsmouth, a “notorious courtesan” named Mollie Sullivan died, it was rumoured, from the effects of a blow from one Tim Sullivan. A post mortem exonerated Sullivan, but a few days later an image appeared in Mollie Sullivan's window. The *Cincinnati Gazette* sent a reporter to investigate:

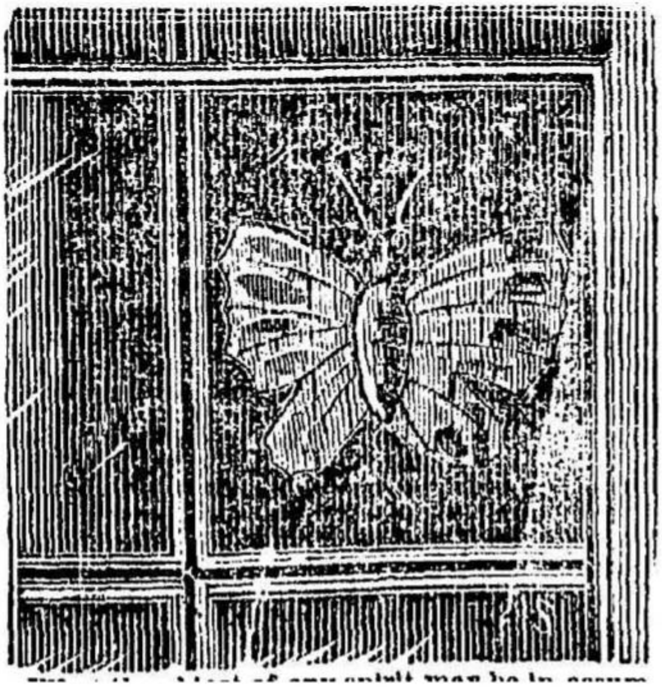
“The window is a 12 light, and the apparition is in the middle lower pane… the resemblance is that of a rather dim negative photograph… Some would swear to a recognition of the features of Mollie… Others can only see the faint outline of a face, the hair, the eyebrows, some semblance of eyes and nose. This much of the central figure appears to be visible to all, and the posture and features always the same. A curtain or blind hung inside the window extinguishes the picture, nor can the picture be seen from the inside of the house. The glass has been removed and examined, and is said to be a smooth glass, with no unusual appearance when out of the window, but when replaced the appearance immediately recurs… I tried in vain to force upon my imagination any such appearance in the other panes of glass. At a nearer view the picture becomes more confused; a magnifying glass does not make the outlines any more definite…”[7]

THE SAN FRANCISCO FACES

In December of 1871, San Francisco found itself visited by an outbreak of the freakish







ABOVE LEFT: The face of an “elderly gentleman with grotesque features” which emerged on a window at the residence of JJ Hucks, 708 Lombard Street, San Francisco. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A butterfly windowpane apparition from 2109 Mason Street, San Francisco. **BELOW:** Sketch of the window portrait of a living man, Elliott Davis, that appeared in his granddaughter’s window (*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 20 Feb 1887).

faces. The phenomenon centred on Mason Street, at a small, two-storey house occupied by a French widow named Jorgensen. Children playing in the street told her that they saw a man’s face at an upper window. She ran upstairs, but could see nothing. “She then went out on the street, when it was plainly discernible… Mme Joergens [sic] states she examined the window-pane and that just to the right of and seemingly beyond the picture first observed, she saw the face and shoulders of another man, having the features of her deceased husband…” [8]

Madame Jorgensen set out to erase the unsettling picture.

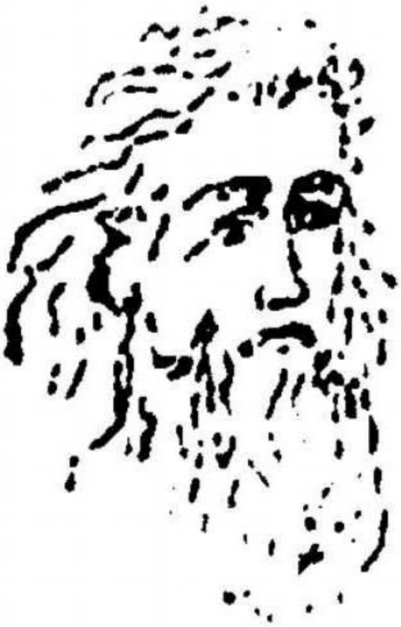
“Every effort has been made to obliterate the features, but without success. Ammonia, vinegar, alcohol, soap-suds, lye, and every variety of abrasive matter, has been used on the window, but the face is as stubborn as ‘Banquos’ ghost, and serenely contemplates all efforts to remove it.” [9]

It was just as well she failed, for the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that RB Woodward of Woodward’s Gardens bought the curio for his museum for $250. They described it thus:

“The image can only be seen by reflected light, and is best apparent when the glass is held at an angle of 45 degrees to the luminary source. Viewed from a short distance, it appears to be the reflection of a human face, or rather, a not well-developed negative. Viewed closely it is perceived to be simply iridescence, such as is frequently seen on window-glasses, and which is the combined result of dust and moisture.” [10]

After Woodward’s purchase, half a dozen windowpane ghosts quickly emerged near the Jorgensen house. These images included an elderly gentleman with “very grotesque features,” [11] which was also purchased for $250 by Mr Woodward, the figure of a butterfly, [12] and the ghost of a fireman named Randall. [13]

MOST WINDOW GHOSTS WERE RECOGNISED BY THEIR VIEWERS



PICTURES OF THE DEAD

Although 1871 was a particularly active year, there are earlier reports, including one from 1870 in Lawrence, Massachusetts, which received wide syndication.

“Since the fall of the Pemberton Mills the city of Lawrence has known no such excitement as that produced on Saturday, the 20th of August, by the unaccountable appearance of a female’s features in a light of glass in the window of a house on Broadway. It appears that a few days previous to the discovery of the phenomenon an elderly lady, after a long and wearing sickness, had died. The day succeeding that on which the funeral occurred a lady… in passing saw a figure in the attic window, which she recognized as that of the deceased lady… The window was removed to the office of Dr William D Lamb, a local doctor, for examination. During the day a firm of photographers, after several attempts, succeeded in getting a very good likeness of the sash and the face it contained… The strangest thing in its connection is that it was not discovered until after the death of an inmate of the house…” [14]

The majority of windowpane ghosts were recognised by their viewers. They were sometimes described as “spirit photographs” and, when identified as the dead, formed a kind of public post-mortem photograph, as in these next two examples.

“SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

A Dead Woman’s Face Sharply Outlined on a Pane of Glass.

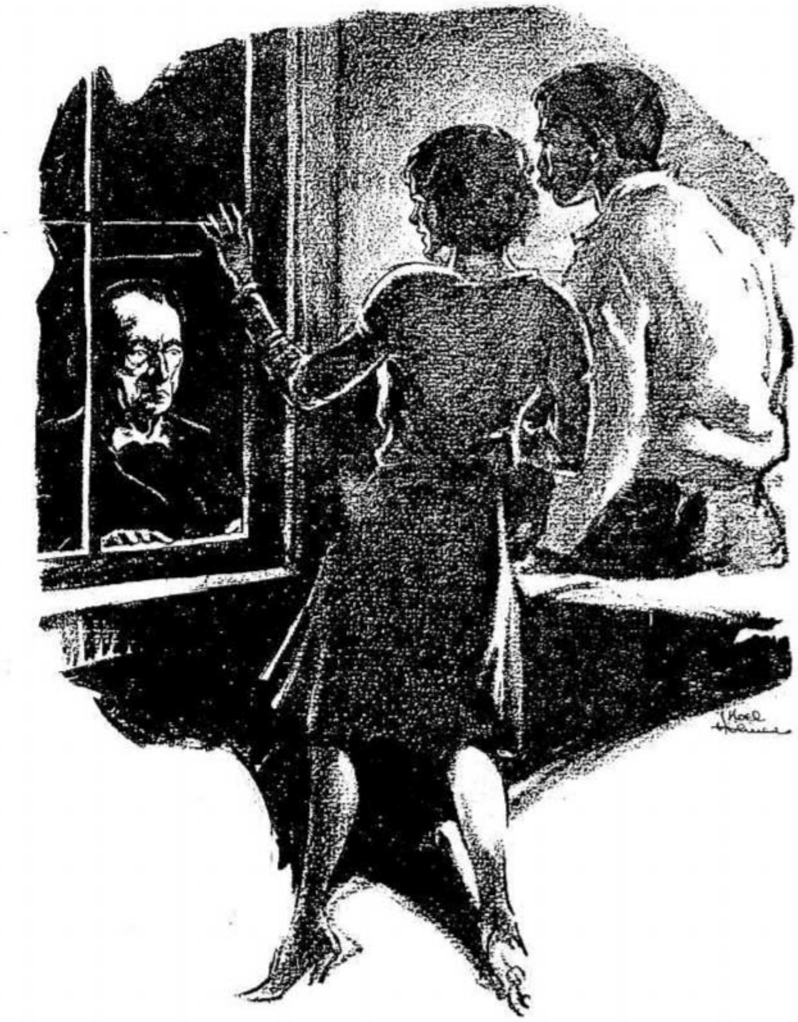
The spirit photograph is that of Mr Bates’ home, an old-time farmhouse not far from the depot in East Thompson that was taken three years ago by a strolling photographer, a stranger. The front of the house is depicted with Mr and Mrs Bates, who are each over 70 years of age, in the foreground. There was no one in the dwelling at the time. Yet in a pane of glass in the upper sash of one of the windows… is the likeness of Mr Bates' mother Sally, who had died… three years ago. The phantom picture is in a window at which Mrs Sally Bates used to sit and sew… The picture has not faded at all, as spirit photographs are said to do, but is as clear and distinct as three years ago." [15]

There is some ambiguity as to whether the next image was embedded in the glass or was a vision of the dead man's spirit:

"Reading, May 11. Oscar D Angstadt, a tailor, died of typhoid fever. Today a week ago, it is alleged, his daughter, Stella, saw the face of her father at a rear second-storey window. She told the other members of the family what she had seen and they became alarmed. It is alleged that the apparition was seen at the same window several times. Residents declare they have seen Mr Angstadt's picture on the window pane very plainly. Mr Angstadt was fond of watching storms and lightning. The belief is that by a strange freak of nature his features were photographed on the window pane and the sun has developed it. The apparition appears in broad daylight." [16]

Some window images were reported as being visible only at specific times of day:

"The body of a man, who died in Chicago recently, was laid out in front of a window facing west. The centre pane, which is now on exhibition, between 7 and 8 o'clock every evening presents a perfect likeness of the dead man. At no other time during the day is the strange appearance visible. Washing it with chemicals has failed to obliterate the mysterious image, which does not fade." [17]

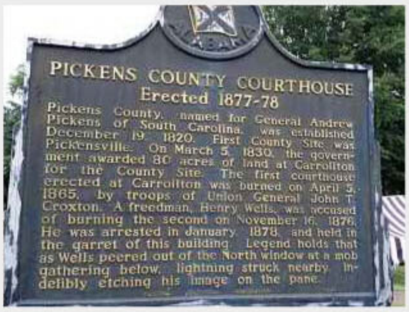


ABOVE: The face of showman Jim Rupe appears in a window in Gallipolis, Ohio, in 1929.

ALABAMA'S FAMOUS LIGHTNING PORTRAIT: THE HENRY WELLS IMAGE

The Pickens County courthouse in Carrollton, Alabama, had already been burnt to the ground once in 1865 by Union forces during the American Civil War. The rebuilt courthouse was torched once again in 1876, with the blame being laid at the door of freed slave Henry Wells who lived nearby. Two years later, the story goes, Wells was apprehended and incarcerated in the garret of the newly-built third courthouse. As a lynch mob gathered outside the building, a terrified Wells watched through the window, yelling: "I am innocent. If you kill me, I am going to haunt you for the rest of your lives!" At that moment a bolt of lightning struck, killing the unfortunate prisoner, whose image was permanently printed on a pane of glass in the window.

The historical evidence suggests a somewhat different chain of events, with Wells either being lynched or dying from injuries sustained while attempting to escape. At any rate, his face is unlikely to be the origin of the fenestral phantom as the windows of the new courthouse were not installed until February of that year. The story is told on a plaque outside the courthouse: *"Pickens County, named for General Andrew Pickens of South Carolina, was established December 19, 1820. First County Site was Pickensville. On March 5, 1830, the government awarded 80 acres of land at Carrollton for the County Site. The first courthouse erected at Carrollton was burned on April 5, 1865, by troops of Union General John T Croxton. A freedman, Henry Wells, was accursed of burning the second on November 16, 1876. He was arrested in January, 1878, and held in the garret of this building. Legend holds that as Wells peered out of the North window at a mob gathering below, lightning struck nearby, indelibly etching his image on the pane."*



PICKENS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Erected 1877-78

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LIGHTNING AND ELECTRICITY

A titillating story from Illinois was very like the celebrated "startled bather" image in the Sexton House, Russellville, Kentucky.[18] It, too, was time-specific and introduced the "lightning daguerreotype" explanation for these images.

"Kankakee, Ill., May 16. At certain hours of the day, especially at 9 o'clock in the morning and just before sundown, [appears] the exact reproduction of a nude woman upon a pane of glass in [a] dwelling of this city… the woman bears a close resemblance to a former occupant of the dwelling. Neighbours and numerous other Kankakeeans who have become much interested in the phenomenon have an explanation of their own. They believe it to be the photograph taken by a flash of lightning.

It is thought that some time, probably during a storm, a woman in a state of nature had become frightened, came from her sleeping-room to draw the blinds and a flash of lightning photographed her form upon the glass.

The picture was discovered a week ago when a young man sitting in a house nearly opposite observed what he thought was the reflection on the window pane of a woman bathing in the house in question. Supposing that a mirror reflected the form… he called to his sister, and, pointing to the singular sight, requested her to run across the street and tell the woman to pull down the blinds. The young woman ran across the street, rapped upon the door and was surprised to see the only woman in the house appear, fully dressed.

Being informed of the figure in the window the woman was surprised and said no one had taken a bath that day.

An investigation followed. Sure enough, there in the glass was the figure of a naked woman and it could not be washed out…"[19]

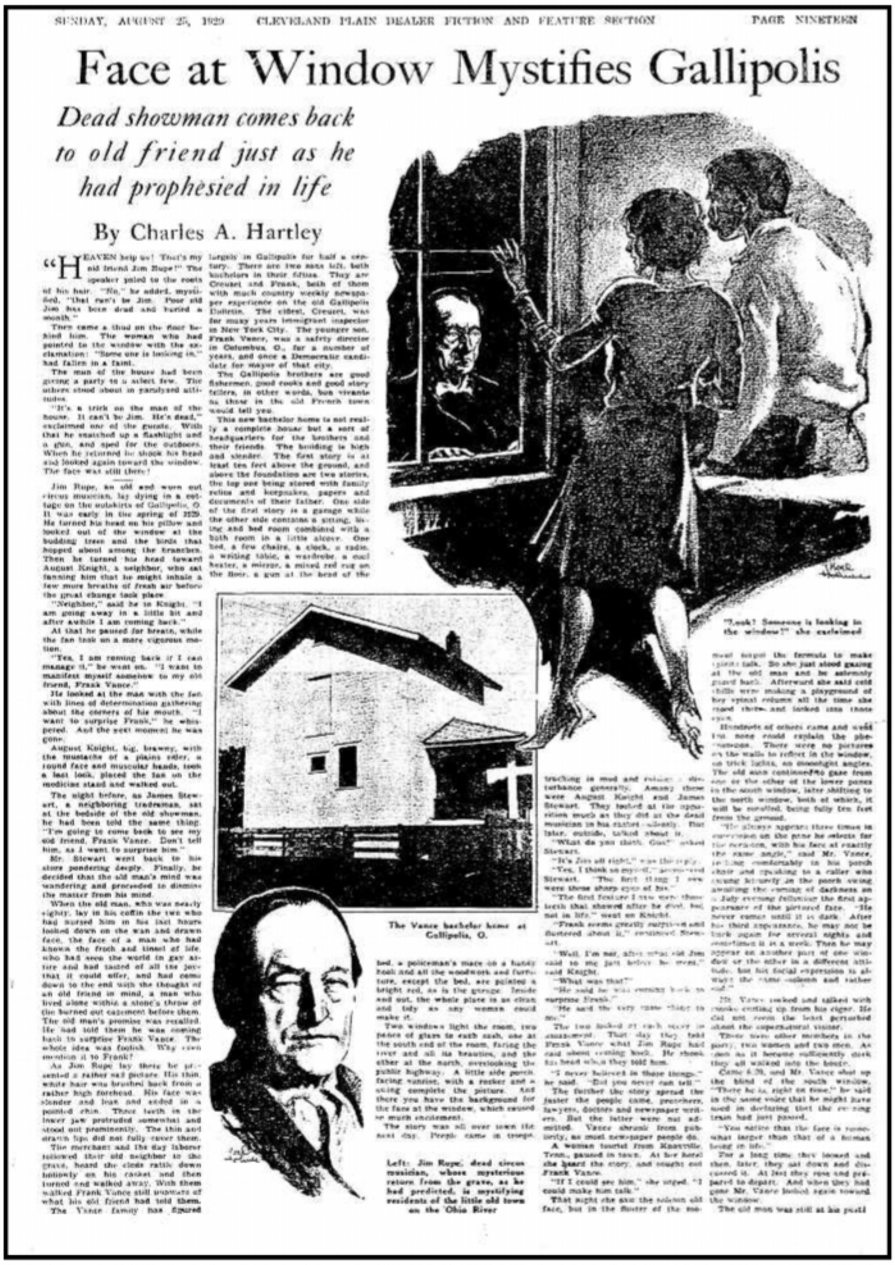
Window images were also called "ghostographs", "lightning daguerreotypes", and "electric photography". Theories about the phenomenon varied. Some discounted the reports as urban legends, while others looked for scientific explanations: iridescence or flaws in the glass, the Sun acting as developer, or lightning-created "photographs". It has been suggested that the images were merely photographic glass plates reused as windowpanes, although I have found only one reference to the practice, from 1928. Others perceived the images as warnings or Spiritualist visitations, as in the case of an outbreak in 1887 in Bracken County, Kentucky. The variety of images – animals, people, President Lincoln, a young girl, a lion, the number 22, rainbows, and a landscape – recalled the events of Milan, Ohio, in 1871 and were thought to predict some terrible event.[20]

One Spiritualist theory of the images was that emotions could act upon the material world. The same force that created "maternal impressions" on the unborn or materialised spirits from a medium's aura could be directed outwards to alter the environment.[21] Some Spiritualists suggested that telekinesis could rearrange the molecules of the glass just as transfiguration mediums' faces took on the lineaments of the dead as "vibrations create molecular modification".[22] Returning to the initial case from Sandusky, we find the recurring "lightning daguerreotype" explanation for the face phenomenon: "A lady had been stopping at a hotel overlooking Maumee Bay, an arm of Lake Erie. Two weeks after her departure, people who lived nearly opposite came over and asked after the health of the lady… remarking that she sat at the window all day.

"The hotel folks said there must be a mistake; the lady in question had been gone some two weeks. 'Oh, no,' said the neighbours, 'we can see her from the street at all times during the day.' Investigation showed that the woman's face and shoulders were photographed (life size) on the window, and that the picture could only be seen from the outside. The lady had sat at the window during a heavy thunderstorm a few days prior to her departure; the neighbours remembered that the picture was first observed after the thunderstorm, yet so distinct were its principal features that they imagined it the woman herself…"[23]

In *The 'Image on Glass': Technology, Tradition, and the Emergence of Folklore*, Barbara Allen suggests that the new glass-plate photograph technology inspired the phenomenon and that when celluloid film was introduced in 1889, reports of "lightning daguerreotypes" ceased.[24] While the heyday of the windowpane ghost was the 1870s and 1880s, there were reports into the 1900s and 1910s. As late as 1929, the citizens of Gallipolis, Ohio were electrified by the face of a dead showman appearing in a window of the house where he had died.[25]

Perhaps the stories most well-known today– the Henry Wells lightning portrait at



SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 1929 CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER FICTION AND FEATURE SECTION PAGE NINETEEN

Face at Window Mystifies Gallipolis

Dead showman comes back to old friend just as he had prophesied in life

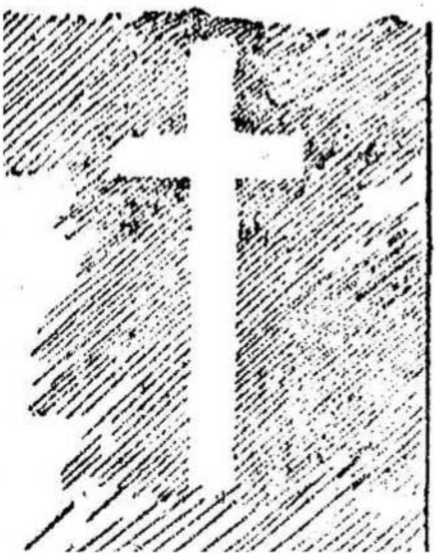
By Charles A. Hartley

"Look! Someone is looking in the window!" she exclaimed.

The Vance bachelor home at Gallipolis, O.

Left: Jim Rupe, dead circus musician, whose mysterious return from the grave, as he had predicted, is mystifying residents of the little old town on the Ohio River

ABOVE: The full report of the appearance of the face of showman Jim Rupe in a window of the house of his friend Frank Vance at Gallipolis, Ohio, in 1929 (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 25 Aug 1929).

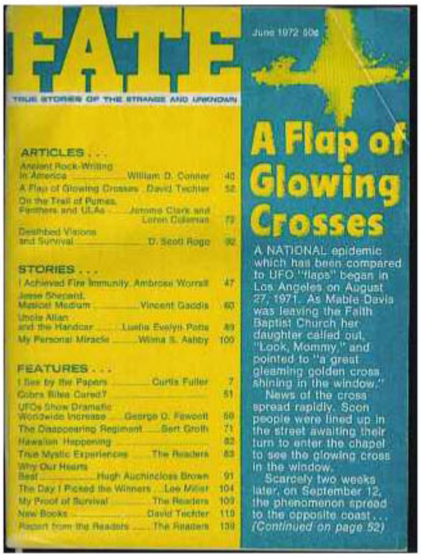


the Pickens Courthouse[26] (see panel, p43) and the bathing lady in Kentucky's Sexton's House – are colourful offshoots of original lightning daguerreotype reports. I can find no references to the "bathing lady" before the 1990s and the stories of Henry Wells first appeared in the 1950s.

THE FATE OF THE FACES

What was the fate of these phantom images on glass? Some disappeared, including the widow Jorgensen's window that faded shortly after Woodward purchased it. Others were explained away, as in another San Francisco case: "The alleged spirit photograph on Mason Street is ascertained by chemical experiments to be a merely accidental discoloration in the material of the glass never before discovered…"[27]

Others were rubbed out: "A curious story is told in New Albany. On the night of Dec 2 Mrs Sophia Scharf… died at her home in East Fifth and Spring Streets, and the funeral took place several days after. The next Saturday… a daughter-in-law of the dead woman… was surprised to observe a perfect representation of the head of her mother-in-law at the window of her house… Several persons, it is claimed, attempted to rub it off, but the picture remained until Saturday evening, when Joseph Scharf, a son of the dead woman… passed his handkerchief over it, when it disappeared."[28]



FATE

TRUE STORIES OF THE STRANGE AND UNKNOWN

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A Flap of Glowing Crosses

A NATIONAL epidemic which has been compared to UFO "flaps" began in Los Angeles on August 27, 1971. As Mable Davis was leaving the Faith Baptist Church her daughter called out, "Look, Mommy," and pointed to "a great gleaming golden cross shining in the window."

News of the cross spread rapidly. Soon people were lined up in the street awaiting their turn to enter the chapel to see the glowing cross in the window.

Scarcely two weeks later, on September 12, the phenomenon spread to the opposite coast…
(Continued on page 52)

ABOVE LEFT: Image of a cross that appeared in the windows of The Church of the Assumption, Canton, Minnesota, 1894. **ABOVE LEFT:** Another outbreak, this time of glowing crosses, occurred in 1972.

Some homeowners resented intrusions by wonder-seekers and broke or defaced the images. At Ironton, Ohio, the figure of a woman in a blue dress that appeared on an Olive Street house in 1880 was painted over.[29] The windowpane portrait of Molly Sullivan was smashed by the landlord to dissuade gawkers. At Milan, Ohio, Deacon Ashley was upset by the face of a woman in a cap that appeared on an upper window of his jewellery store.

"The deacon called in the services of soap and sand, but that would not eradicate it, and finally, despairing of disposing of it in any other way, he gave the weird outline a coat of white paint; this he allowed to remain for a number of weeks, and then removing the paint from the glass, he found that it was still there as plain as ever, and now he has come to the conclusion to let it alone, as he says it is growing plainer every day, so that one can see the ruffles around the border of the old negress's cap…"[30]

A century after the Sandusky faces, a second wave of miraculous images swept the United States in a "Flap of Glowing Crosses," as it was called in *Fate* magazine of June 1972.[31] This was a series of visions of luminous crosses and crucifixes that began in August of 1971 in Los Angeles and spread across the southern states to Florida. It is unknown whether any of these images still exist.

The faces in the window belong to a realm of anomalous images: magic mirrors,[32] visions scryed in crystal balls, bowls of water,[33] and prophetic wells.[34] One might say they form a link between the science of the daguerreotype and the magic of spirit images as produced by William Mumler and the Bangs sisters.

Were the faces mere illusions or reused photographic glass plates? Were they created by some atmospheric anomaly, or by metaphysical forces? Perhaps there *were* actual portraits in the glass: impossible, damned images, melting away in the harsh light of science like faces etched in frost on the windowpane.

Most of the faces have disappeared. Except for a very few images of apparently later date, including the Henry Wells image and the nude bather at Sexton House – no windowpane ghosts survive. At this remove, and given the fleeting nature of the phenomenon, we have no definitive explanation for their appearance. Perhaps the ghostly faces in the glass – so iridescent, so ephemeral, and so haunting – are only the reflection of our own search for answers and our infinite capacity for self-deception. **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

CHRIS WOODYARD is the author of numerous books, including *The Ghost Wore Black: Ghastly Tales from the Past* and *The Victorian Book of the Dead*. She writes on fortean topics at hauntedohiobooks.com.

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[3] For a rare exception see http://wp.me/p3gOGE-KC

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[7] *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 9 Oct 1872, p2.

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[33] "Muddying the Waters: The Mediumship of Mrs Blanchard," http://wp.me/p3gOGE-1g7

[34] "The Spectral Well of Virginia," http://wp.me/p3gOGE-1e4

STRANGE STATESMEN #16

USEFUL IDIOTS

Making another two-part foray into the virtual insanity of Vladimir Putin's Russia, **SD TUCKER** explores what happens when the actors who fill the part of lunatic, far-right, willy-waving politicians for the Kremlin's own benefit begin to identify with their own roles a little too closely ...

GENIA SAVILOV / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Leonid Chernovetsky appears to be a genuine Ukrainian politician. Kiev's mayor from 2006-2012, in 2009 he made headlines after parliament called for him to undergo psychiatric examination due to his odd behaviour. Not only had he announced his intention to fly into outer space with his cat, he had also commissioned a statue of a flying cow and a monument to streetlamps, released his own CD of self-sung 1980s hits, tried to lure pensioners into retirement-homes by offering them pineapples, and encouraged citizens to buy $1,000 gravestones for dead frogs "just to let the frog know it was born for a reason". He even tried to sack the head of Kiev's zoo and "take the animals under control", after being outraged that no "wife" had yet been found for his favourite elephant, "although he is good-looking, even handsome". Once this aim had been achieved, he then intended to "congratulate" the animals upon "various holidays", in some unspecified way. Outraged at being called a madman, Chernovetsky then called a press conference at which he appeared naked except for a pair of tiny swimming-trunks, and began proudly showing off his muscles on the grounds that nobody with such a beautiful body could possibly be insane – "I am physically and psychologically healthy," he announced, but not all believed him. After a rumour emerged that Chernovetsky had escaped to Israel seeking asylum, one news outlet misreported this to the effect that he had escaped *from* an asylum in Israel, and you can see how the confusion might have arisen. [1]

ABOVE: Mayor Leonid Chernovetsky preparing for a lie detector testing during his mayoral election campaign in Kiev.

Across the (now arguably non-existent) border in Russia, though, President Vladimir Putin is also occasionally capable of performing odd, lunatic-like actions of his own, as demonstrated during a live TV webcast made during 2006, when various questions submitted online were put to him. The most popular enquiry, with 11,000 votes, concerned a queer event which had taken place the previous week when Putin had seen a five-year-old boy standing amongst his adoring public, lifted up the lad's shirt, and begun kissing him on the belly for no apparent reason. Why had he done it, the Internet demanded to know? Was he… you know, a bit *Western* or something? Putin, clearly expecting to be asked, was happy to explain. The boy, Nikita, seemed "very independent and serious" yet somehow simultaneously "defenceless" and "very sweet", he said, meaning that "I wanted to cuddle him like a kitten… I will say honestly that I wanted to squeeze him." Touchingly, it later transpired that an awe-struck Nikita had refused to wash his stomach of presidential spittle after the event, because "I just liked him and he liked me very much." Various other popular queries were also answered that day. Effortlessly brushing aside the more impolite ones, like "when did you first have sex?" ("I can't remember; but I do remember the last time!"), Putin was more forthcoming about whether or not the Russian military had any "gigantic humanoid war-robots" in its ranks, as many wanted to know. Surprisingly, Putin said they did; he was talking about early drones. Just as odd was the fourth most-popular question, which asked Putin to confirm whether or not HP Lovecraft's fictional giant octopus-demon Cthulhu was likely to awake from his slumber beneath the Pacific anytime soon. Putin answered the enquiry with apparent sincerity, warning that such mysterious forces ought to be viewed with suspicion, and recommending viewers read the Bible for further guidance. [2] The real question, though, is why did he bother to discuss such trivia? One answer is that, by doing so, the rather more pointed online questions, like "Why does the state now control most of the Russian media?" were basically ignored. By acting crazy whilst being interviewed, Putin had sneakily managed *not* to be interviewed in any real sense at all…

TOOL OF THE KREMLIN

So, in the post-modern landscape of today's USSR 2.0, we have some politicians who act strangely to stage-manage the media, and other politicians who act strangely because they really *are* strange. The problem is telling the difference; and that's precisely how the Kremlin likes it. Under the guidance of men like Vladislav Surkov, Putin's Rasputin-like chief spin-doctor, the governing elite appear to have begun a truly absurd programme of encouraging a combination of flamboyant publicity-seekers, conspiracy theorists, religious fanatics and the mentally ill to begin standing for public office, in the hope of muddying the waters of Russia's alleged 'democracy' for their own benefit. The prime example, whose long acting career predates even that of Putin himself, is the well-known ultra-nationalist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovsky. A founder-figure of Russia's Liberal Democrats, 'The Lord God's Monkey', as he is sometimes known, has often been described by critics and fans alike as a "fascist". But is he really? Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, it has been alleged that elements within the KGB wanted to create a new fake opposition party with a biddable leader to foster the illusion of nascent democracy in the dawning post-Soviet world – and that the Lib Dems, with their seemingly ironic name, were that party. Whilst at first Zhirinovsky played the part of far-right firebrand plausibly enough to alarm the West and make them grateful that the more upright (when not drunk) figure of Boris Yeltsin was Russia's leader, as time passed and it became obvious his party generally voted to pass most government schemes, Zhirinovsky began to fulfil a different role, channelling the gullible Alf Garnett-vote away from more genuine channels and, increasingly, providing comic relief with his outrageous antics and policy-proposals. These have included: promising cheap vodka and better underwear for all, declaring an immediate dictatorship to free voters from the tyranny of having to vote, ordering the army to kill all migratory birds to eradicate bird-flu, filming himself beating a donkey, pledging to flood Germany with nuclear waste, throwing orange-juice over an opponent on live TV and promising to "burn all Paris". He even beat Donald Trump to the idea of expelling Muslims from his homeland and building a big, beautiful wall to ensure they didn't come back, "like the Chinese did – they were clever boys, you know." Disturbingly, in 1993 parliamentary elections, the Lib Dems came first in 64 out of 87 regions. [3]

Perhaps Zhirinovsky did *too* well in the 1993 elections, however, as it was not long after this that he began obsessively making a series of mad statements about secret Soviet super-weapons he claimed unaccountably to be in possession of, which seemed actively designed to destroy his credibility with mainstream voters. War in the Balkans provided an excellent opportunity to strike up a friendship with his fellow nationalist nutter, the Serbian paramilitary war-criminal Arkan. In 1994, he visited Serbia, reassuring Arkan that he had brought with him an imaginary device called the 'elipton' which, according to whatever mood Zhirinovsky was in, killed people with either sound-waves or electronic-pulses. As he put it, "It is an electronic laser-weapon… There is no life in its wake… In fact, it is an ecological weapon, which we won't use unless we have to." During his visit, Zhirinovsky claimed to have used a "very, very small" elipton himself to kill 12 Bosnian Muslims, an 'event' for which no evidence now existed because "it can kill people in a matter of hours and those killed do not know what they died from." Impressed, Arkan warned NATO that if they tried to interfere, he would "unleash the beast" on them himself; furthermore, Zhirinovsky claimed that he had attained secret pledges from Russian army officers who would flood the Balkans with 300,000 troops in the event of Western intervention. To ensure Serbian victory, Zhirinovsky had given the rights to produce more eliptons to a local company called Elektron, but when journalists investigated Elektron's factory they found it was simply a run-down warehouse for a baby-clothes shop, and an alleged transit-point for selling on stolen wine.

VASILY MAXIMOV / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

YURI KADOBNOV / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A bare-chested Vladimir Zhirinovsky, proponent of cheap vodka and better underwear, cavorts with fans in Moscow. **BELOW:** Vladimir Putin views the submerged Cthulhu with suspicion but may have approved of Zhirinovsky's plans to flood Britain and Turkey.

> THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE BECAUSE "THOSE KILLED DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DIED FROM"

In the years since, Zhirinovsky has responded to any foreign-affairs crisis by threatening the 'aggressor-nation' in question with having equally fearsome nuclear bombs dropped in nearby seas, thus causing massive tsunamis to destroy them – apparently, Britain, Japan, Turkey, Georgia and the US are all destined for a watery doom, "a quiet and peaceful" fate, in which "whole continents will be put to sleep forever". [4]

No genuine politician could ever speak like this. Particularly undiplomatic was a filmed drunken rant aimed at US President George W Bush in 2002 concerning the imminent attack on Saddam Hussein's Iraq. "George, you are cowboy," Zhirinovsky began, telling him to "forget your daddy"

ALEXANDER NEMENOV / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Zhirinovsky has offered to impregnate any lonely or chidless woman in Russia who wants him to, and boasts of having ejaculated "probably" 10,000 times (including masturbation). He's keen on bears too.

George Bush Sr and his previous success in the first Iraq War of 1990/91. His "shitty economy" and that "dirty green paper" called the dollar wouldn't help him now, as he was surrounded by a Cabinet full of sycophantic "cocksuckers, all-round hand-jobbers [and] faggots", while the brave Mr Hussein was "the only one on Earth who tells you to fuck off". Rather than bombing Iraq, Zhirinovsky recommended the US and Russia combine forces to sink Australia for a laugh. If they did not, then he threatened to personally change the Earth's gravitational field overnight and submerge America beneath the waves instead. Even worse than Bush, meanwhile, was his Secretary of State, that well-known "slut" Condoleeza Rice, whom he derided as a mere "black whore who needs a good cock." Zhirinovsky suggested Rice spent a night in a Moscow barracks, where she could "choke on Russian sperm [until] it will be leaking out of her ears" rather than invading Iraq, but she doesn't seem to have taken him up on the offer. This sozzled rant went down well at home, so much so that in 2006 Zhirinovsky decided to recycle it. Rice was so constantly critical of Russia "because she is a single woman who has no children," Zhirinovsky explained. "Such women are very rough… They can be happy only when talked and written about everywhere: 'Oh, Condoleeza, what a remarkable woman, what a charming Afro-American lady! … What a courageous, tough and strong female she is!'" In fact, however, Rice was "complex-prone", "dangerous" and "scary", he said, like a "malicious mother-in-law", before going on to propose that "the civilised world" should impose a ban on senior female politicians being single on the grounds that they would inevitably project their sexual neuroses onto the global stage. Rice was only criticising Russia to get male attention, said Zhirinovsky, proposing yet again that she attend a nearby barracks to suck it all out of her system. [5]

SPERM WARFARE

The more outrageously bigoted or absurd a statement, the more popularity a Russian politician gets from it these days. Due to years of exposure to the likes of Zhirinovsky, Russians are increasingly beginning to see through their electoral process as a giant con-trick; one recent poll found that half of all Russians expected elections to be fixed, with a quarter saying they would be perfectly happy to sell their vote for the equivalent of £58. [6] So, what is the point of voting at all in a country where, whoever you vote for, you end up with Putin? Instead of looking at Russian elections as declarations of confidence in candidates' fitness to serve, it has been suggested by the Kremlin-watcher Peter Pomerantsev that we should instead view them as being something more akin to reality TV-style talent-shows. According to Pomerantsev, Putin's tame pseudo-parties are now doing so badly that they are in danger of being shut down and replaced by new alternatives. Due to the machinations of PR-guru Vladislav Surkov, Putin now gets a great deal of his public support from (ostensibly) non-political quarters, such as the nation's suspiciously conservative biker-gangs, the Orthodox Church and YouTube stars, with boring bureaucrats struggling to compete in the public's affections. Therefore, even loyal Putinistas need to improve their 'ratings' if they are to survive, with the end result being a race to propose the most ridiculous or offensive laws possible, the point being, as Pomerantsev has argued, not to actually get them enacted, but to "fill up the [national] conversation", thus gaining enough fans not to be voted off-screen in the next so-called 'general election'. [7] So bad have things now become that, in 2014, a legislator named Maxim Reznik drafted a bill aiming to force all electoral candidates to undergo psychiatric examination, hoping thereby "to expose real idiots" from standing for office, thus leaving the public crystal-clear that any politicians who tried to act loopy for votes were simply putting it on. [8] A noble idea – unless, of course, Reznik was only putting forward the proposal in order to gain more valuable media-attention himself…

The best way of attracting the media spotlight is through sex. The man who made the early running in this field, naturally, was Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who has in the past offered to personally impregnate any lonely or childless woman in Russia who wants him to, adopted the slogan "Let's have group-sex [in the voting-booth]!", and boasted of having ejaculated "probably" 10,000 times in his life, "if you include masturbation". During a 1996 *Playboy* interview, he seemingly got bored and proposed that he, his female interviewer, her translator and one of his bodyguards have a gang-bang, and in 1998 expressed a peculiar desire to meet with the then-US President Bill Clinton in order "to together recall our sexual experiences", something Clinton himself eventually ended up having to do alone under oath. [9] Rather than playing the libertine, however, playing

OLGA MALTSEVA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Christian Milonov – not a fan of the "Europe-wide gay parade" that is the Eurovision Song Contest.

the prude can also be a productive tactic. Take Vitaly Milonov, a St Petersburg city councillor who became famous after his very popular 2012 law banning the spreading of 'gay propaganda' to children was adopted nationally. Since then, Milonov has been keeping his name in the public eye with a series of other, increasingly silly, proposals for hyper-conservative legislation, like giving citizenship rights to embryos, thus putting an end to abortion as such mini-citizens would be considered to have enough "legal capacity" to object to their fate (and thus even potentially hire lawyers?). He has also called for a boycott of the "Europe-wide gay parade" and "Sodom Show" that is Eurovision, proposed that any women without kids by the age of 23 be forced into the army, and demanded that *Game of Thrones* be banned as "every tenth character… is a sexual deviant". The committed Orthodox Christian Milonov makes some fair points about Western 'illiberal liberals' wanting to impose their values on others who don't share them, but when he calls for the gay Apple CEO Tim Cook to be given a lifetime ban from Russia in case he spreads AIDS, gonorrhoea and ebola amongst the populace, he probably goes too far. Milonov thinks that senior Russian officials should be banned from using gay-manufactured iPhones as they are potentially vulnerable to US spies, but admits to owning one himself. This is OK, however, as the device was given to him by some "European homophobe friends", so presumably came with special AIDS-proof anti-virus software installed. Milonov's latest bright idea is forcing children to attend special state-sponsored patriotic indoctrination-camps from the age of four, to counter the effects of exposure to abnormal Western influences online. These should not be compulsory for parents who are happy for their kids to grow up into some sort of Euro-pervert, Milonov says, "but for anyone who wants their child to grow up a normal person it should, of course, be compulsory."[10]

LEFT: Yelena Mizulina reportedly called for bans on oral sex and being Jewish in Russia.

Another politician who dislikes iPhones is Yelena Mizulina, who says they are a key tool for pederasts, but seeing as she routinely accuses anyone who dares criticise her of belonging to an imaginary "pædophile lobby", this is only to be expected. Mizulina is an interesting case-study. In the early years of her career she seemed to be a liberal, but in 2007, after having done badly in the previous 2003 election, she swapped allegiance to one of Surkov's fake 'opposition' parties, A Just Russia, and began going all Mary Whitehouse, supporting various reactionary measures like putting a tax on divorce and banning women from attending university until after they had given birth. In 2013, it was widely reported (and widely believed) that she had even gone so far as to propose total bans on oral sex and/or being Jewish in Russia, but it later transpired that this was false; one man she blamed for spreading the slander was Nikolay Alexeyev, a gay rights campaigner whom she proposed be punished through forced community service in a position where he would be unable to spread his deviant ideas to any others who might be receptive to them, "for example, driving a hearse". Given this, what are we to make of her latest alleged scheme, that of mailing out free samples of President Putin's sperm to any wannabe-mother who'd like a cupful? Once they had received and impregnated themselves with "the genetic material of the President" using a spare turkey-baster or whatever, Mizulina is supposed to have said that such patriotic females should then gain special state benefits before the child grows old enough to be sent away to a military training-school, with this clone-army of mini-Vlads ultimately going on to "form the military and political elite of the state".[11] But is this really a proper proposal, or merely another hoax or avant-garde pseudo-policy? In Russia's confusing post-modern TV talent-show version of 'democracy', it is hard to know what to think about anyone – you just put your cross next to your favourite actor in the polling-booth and hope they aren't the next to get thrown out of the House by Big Brother Surkov. FT

***Next time**: Surkov's plans go disastrously awry as a Gnostic far-right super-sage emerges, bent upon possessing Putin's soul and destroying reality itself in the name of the Motherland!*

NOTES

1 **FT250:9**; www.pravdareport.com/society/stories/18-03-2009/107257-kiev_mayor_speedo-0/; www.unian.info/society/185344-kyiv-mayor-sacks-zoo-chief-for-failing-to-find-mate-for-elephant.html; http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2048367,00.html; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonid_Chernovetskyi. Another odd Ukrainian is the former PM Yulia Tymoshenko, who allegedly believes she is the reincarnation of Eva Peron. Tymoshenko is said to have discovered her past life through a fortune-teller, though she had suspected she may have been Peron ever since seeing the 1996 film *Evita*. See https://newrepublic.com/article/72252/kiev-chameleon

2 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/5155448.stm; www.kommersant.com/page.asp?id=688308; www.hauntedvampire.com/?p=1785

3 Compiled from: www.spiegel.de/international/world/zhirinovsky-s-follies-nuclear-threats-and-busty-ladies-in-the-race-for-second-place-in-russia-a-538403.html; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/667745.stm; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1446759.stm; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Zhirinovsky; http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-10/news/wr-283_1_political-spectrum; www.nytimes.com/2014/12/12/opinion/russias-ideology-there-is-no-truth.html?_r=0; www.rferl.org/content/The_Revolution_Will_Be_StageManaged/1852907.html. Zhirinovsky's son Igor Lebedev has now entered politics too, following after dad by tweeting "Well done lads, keep it up!" to Russian football hooligans during Euro 2016; see www.theguardian.com/football/2016/jun/13/moscow-football-official-to-violent-fans-well-done-lads-keep-it-up

4 www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/serbs-threaten-to-unleash-deadly-secret-weapon-1394229.html; www.tol.org/client/article/15611-serbs-and-russians-vladimir-zhirinovskys-flying-circus.html; http://thetruthnews.info/Russiawmd.pdf; www.rt.com/politics/zhirinovsky-meteorite-american-weapon-316/. Predictably, some of Zhirinovsky's statements have been taken at face-value by conspiracy-theorists; see http://thetruthnews.info/wordpress/?tag=russian-speaker-of-the-house-vladimir-zhirinovsky, which contains the exceedingly Surkov-like disclaimer that "What you are about to read is fiction except for what's not."

5 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExfLOwmSD88 for his drunken speech; www.pravdareport.com/russia/politics/11-01-2006/9488-condoleeza-0/ has the subsequent statements. In 2003, the speech was remixed into a rap-song; see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2801433.stm

6 *Times*, 26 Aug 2016.

7 www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n19/peter-pomerantsev/forms-of-delirium.

8 https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/russias-12-most-surreal-legislative-initiatives-38566.

9 Eliot Borenstein, *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture*, Cornell University Press, 2008, pp41-43.

10 *Times*, 31 Aug 2015; http://sputniknews.com/analysis/20120830/175525037/Vitaly-Milonov-Laying-Down-Gods-Law-in-Russia.html; www.rt.com/politics/embryo-rights-ban-abortion-747/; www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/30/russia-boycott-eurovision-gay-parade; www.buzzfeed.com/maxseddon/russian-official-says-apple-ceo-should-be-banned-from-russia?utm_term=.qpqXJmwwdY#.ux6LWMOO9d; https://themoscowtimes.com/news/russias-anti-gay-crusader-wants-to-outlaw-game-of-thrones-47375.

11 http://observer.com/2014/11/russian-lawmaker-proposes-mailing-putin-sperm-to-impregnate-russian-women/; www.opendemocracy.net/egor-mostovshikov/yelena-mizulina-creation-of-conservative; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yelena_Mizulina.

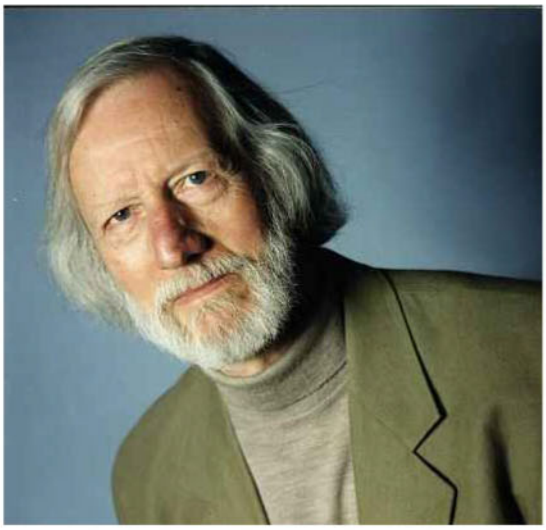
THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

16. DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN

Lunching grandly many years ago at the Masters' table in the Hierophant's Fortress of Arrogance – as one did – FT's founding editor Bob Rickard mused in our presence: "Hilary Evans doesn't do research as such. He sits on high and meditates on stuff, and every few years comes down from the mountains, and presents the world with his wisdom." Like most of what was said around that table, from where we ourselves might view misty mountain tops below us should they deign to show themselves through the clouds, this wasn't entirely true. Hilary Evans did get his boots muddy now and then doing field research, but there's no doubt he preferred investigating the library. His erudition was phenomenal, and he gave the impression of having read just about everything, and almost as widely in French as in English, to the huge advantage of his readers. One wonders how he did it, as well as find the energy to write voluminously and fulfil a demanding role at the Mary Evans Picture Library. In the mid-1980s he produced two classic pieces of fortean wisdom – not quite written on tablets of stone, for one doubts Hilary Evans had the time to climb any actual mountains, even had he the inclination. Nonetheless these books should be seen as founding texts of modern fortean thought, for they are models of scholarship, clear thinking, and scrupulous open-mindedness, going where the evidence leads but, on the way, always acknowledging the possible other case.

Visions • Apparitions • Alien Visitors (1984) and *Gods • Spirits • Cosmic Guardians* (1987) are really one book, both being dedicated to puzzling out the nature, sources and meaning of various kinds of encounter with non-human entities. They follow roughly parallel paths that end in similar places – the later one having a simpler but in some ways subtler conclusion. This is the one to read if you don't have time for both, although you'd thereby miss some revealing details of particular cases and investigations, which Evans mentions only in passing in the second book (he seems to have taken for granted that his readers were familiar with the earlier study).



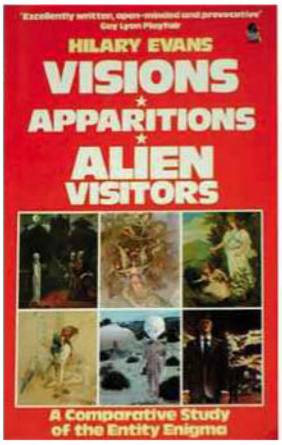
In *Visions • Apparitions • Alien Visitors* he divides the 'entity enigma' into useful categories: those met in dreams, as hallucinations, hauntings, religious visions, as connected with UFOs (with a separate section on Men in Black), demons, and so on, each with accounts of relevant cases. Evans presents these with a certain detached humour – for instance: "The literature on the Devil is voluminous: in our own day, a belief that Satan is alive and well and living in California is the theme of a host of books in which lurid case histories… are narrated with much relish". This follows a discussion of the problem of interpreting encounter experiences: people who have seen Satan give a veritable panoply of descriptions and, therefore, some visions of the Virgin Mary are open to question on the grounds that they were false, inspired by the Prince of Lies himself, as some Catholic theologians have had it. But how do you tell? Evans reveals what, one would guess, not a lot of people know: perhaps the most celebrated Marian visionary, Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes fame, described her Mary as only *une petite demoiselle* dressed in white, no taller than herself – hardly the picture-postcard Virgin of tradition. Even after repeated questioning the entity would eventually describe itself only as 'the Immaculate Conception', during the 17th of 18 visions. This, remarks Evans, is "nonsense, as phrased", and continues: "In other words, the one indication of identity on the Lourdes entity's part is itself a reason for doubting the claim." This ambiguity is not as rare as one might imagine. Of 57 "well-substantiated cases", 30 'Virgin Marys' did not identify themselves. Thus, "*even if Bernadette had a genuine experience, it was not necessarily of the Virgin Mary*. Consequently, the interpretations of the 'false visions', that they were necessarily of the Devil, is no less in doubt."

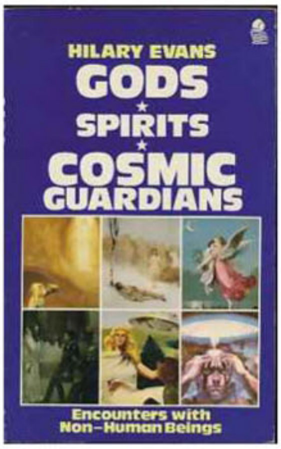
Evans makes a related point about Men in Black: in the USA, they are all supposed to turn up as a trio in as-new but obsolete black Cadillacs with unissued licence plates. But in 32 "more detailed and reliable" cases, 20 were solitary visitors, and four of those were telephone callers. In only nine cases were cars mentioned, and only three of those were Cadillacs. Only two of those were black and only two (not the same pair) were out of date. "[H]ere," says Evans, "we have a fine example of the myth-making process at work: the 'best' details tend to be accepted as the norm, even though they do not predominate numerically." Many pages later, he introduces us to Michel Monnerie's concept of the 'authorised myth', the contention that witnesses fit their inexplicable experiences into a stereotype that, consciously or not, they have absorbed from their own culture and that seems best to explain (or describe) them, not least because it carries "the sanction of social acceptance". So a nebulous 19th-century 'vision of the Virgin' may be the same in essence as a 20th-century 'alien encounter'; one man's ghost may be another man's demon.

Evans was probably also the first to introduce another Francophone, Belgian philosopher Bertrand Méheust, to English readers. In *Science-fiction et Soucoupes Volantes: Une réalité mythico-physique* (1978) Méheust demonstrated how every facet of the UFO phenomenon, from patterns of abductions to physical details of the 'spacecraft', had already appeared in early 20th-century science fiction. Evans, after pondering the implications of this, and observing that science fiction deals in potential futures and possibilities, wonders: "It could be that… all [those] whose experiences seem to straddle the borderline of reality are, in effect, writing their own science fiction." Aiding them – whether seeing ghosts, the Night Hag, or Venus as a windowed UFO – is what he calls 'the producer', the part of us that generates dreams and perhaps also the altered state of consciousness in which these visions and apparitions move. They occur in response to emotional and sometimes practical need; their form "will be determined by the percipient's personal preoccupations, his cultural background, and by the immediate situation. It will also be adapted to the context of the time and place in which it occurs." Yet Evans, ever the fortean, keeps in reserve the possibility that an external agency or psychic process is at work in *some* events such as phantasms of the living or recently dead, doppelgängers, and the like, especially those who provide crucial, previously hidden information.

That is inevitably a pretty skimpy account of a closely argued, constantly thought-provoking yet highly readable book. Our account of *Gods • Spirits • Cosmic Guardians* will be more so, for this labyrinthine thesis is far more densely written, and rather less studded with Evans's wry, understated sense of humour. The denseness arises not from any lack of clarity, but from setting out new food for thought in virtually paragraph. He covers much the same ground in that he deals with encounters with religious figures, ghosts and séance-room phenomena, and ETs in various forms, and then goes on to analyse them in terms of their context, necessity to the witness, and reality (or source). But the illustrative cases are largely different and differently illuminating, and his conclusion more radical.

> "SOME BOOKS SHOULD BE TASTED, SOME DEVOURED, BUT ONLY A FEW SHOULD BE CHEWED AND DIGESTED THOROUGHLY."
>
> *Francis Bacon*


'Excellently written, open-minded and provocative'
Guy Lyon Playfair
HILARY EVANS
VISIONS
APPARITIONS
ALIEN VISITORS
A Comparative Study of the Entity Enigma



One of the ways Evans pursues his argument is by serving the reader telling morsels to digest more or less subliminally. For instance, when maverick Christian 'apostle' Michel Potay describes his visions of Christ, Evans quotes him recording that one night "as I was looking at this single stigmatised foot he [Jesus] told me 'I was the last to be crucified. They were short of a nail, so only one of my feet had a nail through it.'" Potay is making his vision authentic by its quirkiness, even implausibility, of detail. Evans observes that whereas Christian visionaries communicate with a narrow range of authoritative figures, "each ET witness encounters a slightly different entity, from a different place of origin, and is given a slightly different assignment, receives slightly different messages, and so on." (He was writing before Messrs Hopkins, Jacobs, *et al.* hammered out the Teflon template for 'authentic' alien abductions.) Of materialised spirits of the departed, he correctly notes: "As revealed by the camera … materialised spirits are so ludicrously unlifelike that even the fondest relative would turn away in disgust were his reality-testing faculties not sabotaged by emotion." And by near-darkness, of course. Through making such points Evans builds up his case that encounter experiences are essentially subjective (and rarely is there more than one witness to them), but built on foundations that are accepted as authoritative. Context is critical in forming and focusing the subjective experience: long before Bernadette had her encounters at Lourdes, the area had a tradition of Marian visions [see "The Dark Side of Lourdes" by Therese Taylor, **FT222:32-38**]; she was sickly, poor, and preparing for her first Communion; and not long before her visitation she was said to resemble two previous visionaries. And so the stage was set.

Throughout, the question arises: what sets off these experiences, if they have no objective content? Evans doesn't look for specific psychological triggers, such as sleep paralysis (although he recognises them), so much as processes within the individual witness. Burrowing further into these, he has a habit of turning conventional formulations on their heads. *A propos* abductions, for instance, he asks: "Suppose… we take as our starting point… that these cases *don't* make sense?" (So there must be a reason for that…) Pondering hallucinations, he muses: "We assume that in certain states our brain is *triggered* to produce hallucinations; but could it not be the other way round: that what happens in these states is that we are *enabled* to produce them? In other words, should we look not for an *event-producing* factor, but a *restriction-removing* one?" And questioning the label 'multiple personality *disorder*' (MPD), he observes that it's important to remember that: "dissociation confers a *short-term benefit* on the subject, enabling him to cope with a situation that he is unable to resolve in any conventional way." (This would still be true if, as is currently suspected, MPD is largely iatrogenic. Think on't – just imagine being trapped by a pushy shrink.)

These oblique approaches create a fresh underpinning for Evans's insight in the previous book that an encounter experience is created in response to inner need: and in that psychodrama "the roles of both witness and entity are played by projections from the individual's own mind." But matters don't end there. These encounters have a purpose. To resolve, satisfy or redirect the need (of which the witness may not even be aware; hence the importance of the entity being an authority-figure of some kind), and to achieve resolution, may press him to do something he may not otherwise have done. Out of the experience comes a sense of being chosen, although this may be life-enhancing and -affirming for some but ego-bloating for others. Very common among the cases Evans cites are those who feel a profound sense of psychic rebirth, and begin their lives anew.

How we identify the ultimate source of these encounters boils down to a matter of belief, but Evans is less convinced than in the previous book that external agencies are at work. In the end, he leans toward encounters being "not with gods, not with spirits, not cosmic guardians, but with the higher aspects of their own selves." Indeed a book to be chewed and digested thoroughly. FT

Hilary Evans, *Visions • Apparitions • Alien Visitors: A comparative study of the entity enigma*, Aquarian Press 1984; *Gods • Spirits • Cosmic Guardians: A comparative study of the encounter experience*, Aquarian Press 1987.

A GREAT WAY TO FIGHT POVERTY

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HAVE YOUR SAY

forum

The Rapture Index

TED HARRISON looks at how recent political events have been perceived by End Times watchers and Conservative Christians – is the last Trump about to sound?

TED HARRISON is a writer, artist and former BBC religious affairs correspondent. A regular contributor to *Fortean Times*, his latest book is *The Death and Resurrection of Elvis Presley*.

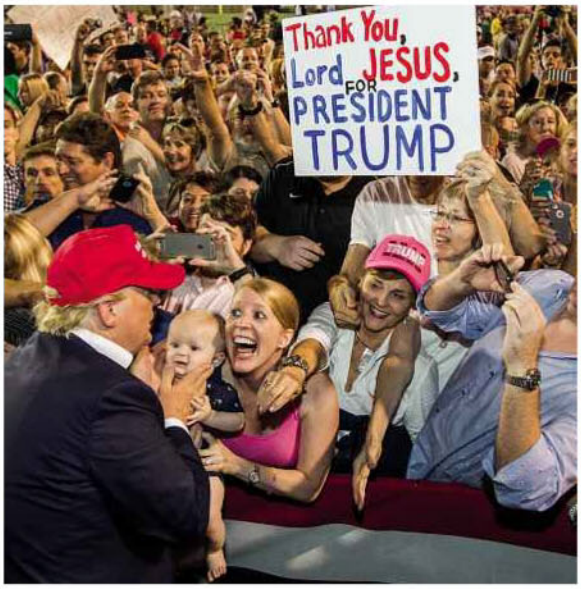
The rise, and now the election, of Donald Trump as US president have coincided with the Rapture Index hitting an all time peak. The compilers describe the Rapture Index as the Dow Jones of End Time activity and warn that when the index hits 160 their advice is to "fasten your seat belts". In October and November it was being recorded at 189.

The index is keenly watched by hundreds of Conservative Christians expecting Judgment Day at any moment. It will come when the chosen few are whisked away to Heaven. "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." [1]

This event, known as The Rapture, will precede the sequence of apocalyptic happenings foretold in the Bible's Book of Revelation. The Beast, the Anti-Christ and Armageddon are just waiting for the start gun!

The men behind the index are Americans Terry James and Todd Strandberg. Their organisation Rapture Ready has been monitoring events for the signs of the times since 1987. When the end is nigh the Bible says: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars… For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." [2]

So Todd and Terry follow events in the news and rate 45 separate categories with a score from one to five. One means little activity, five means there is major trouble ahead. Terry is a prolific author on all matters apocalyptic, while Todd – a former sergeant who now lives on his Air Force pension – spends his days scanning the news for omens of the apocalypse: "He has no job, no significant other… He spends the vast majority of his waking hours studying the connection between current events and the prophetic scriptures in the Bible – two circles in a Venn diagram that overlap more with each passing year. If his Rapture Index is correct, then the four horseman are saddling up." [3]


Thank You, Lord JESUS, FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP
TRUMP

MARK WALLHEISER / GETTY IMAGES

Todd checks the stock market and the price of oil for unusual activity: reports of terrorism, the drug scene, nuclear arms proliferation, UFO sightings, exorcisms, false prophets and signs of the Antichrist. Between them, Todd and Terry look for reports of earthquakes and natural disasters; for troop movements and the build up of military tension; for evidence of economic problems such as inflation and unemployment; for famine and disease around the world. Their attention is focused especially on Israel and Russia; the latter nation they identify as the Biblical Gog and Israel as the location of the final battle.

Back in the balmy days of December 1993 Todd and Terry gave all the economic indices plus those relating to hurricanes and plagues the lowest of all ratings: just one. Of the other factors that contribute to the final total, few went above two and the total RI was a lowly 58.

Currently there is only one category that is marked lower than three: food supply. Debt, trade, moral standards, plagues, anti-Semitism and arms proliferation have all peaked at five, the highest and most dangerous value possible. It is of little surprise that the RI has hit a record peak. The category 'beast government' is also at five, but Donald Trump's supporters and opponents might be reassured to learn that the categories 'False Christs' and 'Anti-Christ' are still only recording three.

Todd and Terry explain that their calculations are not meant to predict the Rapture, however: the index is only designed to measure the type of activity that could act as a precursor to the rapture. It is a "prophetic speedometer. The higher the number, the faster we're moving towards the occurrence of pre-tribulation rapture."

Following an earlier all time high of 182, at the time of 9/11, in March 2003 *Christianity Today* described how Todd Strandberg plus 12 employees ran a string of end-time websites. Back then, they attracted more than 250,000 visitors between them each month.

One of these websites runs a regular commentary on world events called Midnight Nearing.

In September this year it wondered why "Satan has invested so much energy into Hillary Clinton. Since he is the god of this world, one would think he would have picked someone else from the thousands of Democrats; someone that does not have the negative legal and health issues that shroud Hillary. The only reason I can find for why… is because he knows what will happen if she wins… Destroying Christians is very high on her 'To Do' list." [4]

The website and index have attracted much criticism and even a mention in *The Encyclopedia of American Loons* – "Hysterically demented dimwits; the virulent, ardent insanity of these guys actually make them a couple of notches more deranged than Harold Camping" (the US radio evangelist and failed end-times prophet; see **FT277:26-27, 285:34-37**) – an assessment that *FT* could not possibly comment on. FT

NOTES

[1] 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

[2] Matthew 24 5-8.

[3] Jennings Brown, vocativ.com, 11 Jan 2016.

[4] Midnight Nearing, www.raptureready.com, 19 Sept 2016.

Thanks for the memories?

Do the characteristics seemingly inherited by recipients of donated organs or the learned behaviour retained by decapitated flatworms suggest that memory may reside outside the brain? **ROB GANDY** examines the evidence.

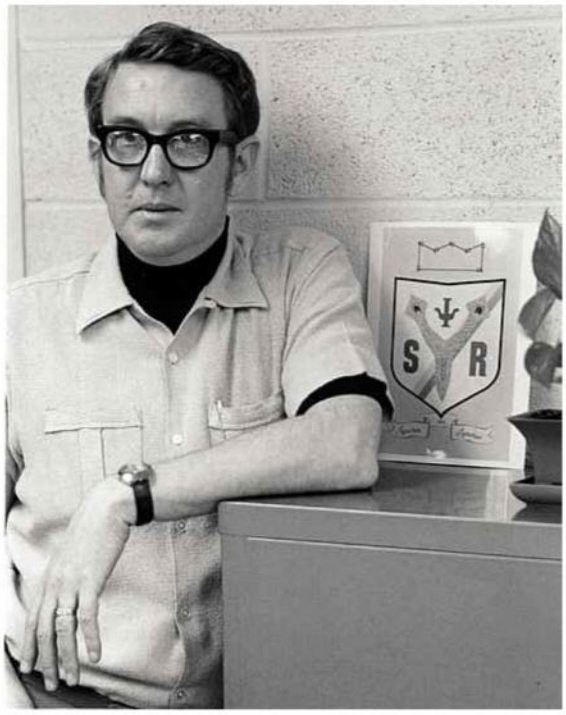
ROB GANDY is a visiting professor at the Liverpool Business School, John Moores University. He has written for *FT* on Merseyside doppelgängers, ghostlore, football curses and phantom hitchhikers.

Over the years, *Fortean Times* has published several articles summarising examples of the phenomena generally referred to as "cellular memory" (**FT100:12, FT159:24, FT236:18-19**). These involve people receiving transplanted organs from (primarily deceased) donors and then taking on characteristics of the donor or even having memories that relate to the deceased. Examples include: a woman with vertigo who became a climber; a lawyer who began eating Snickers, having always hated chocolate; a seven-year-old girl who had nightmares about being killed after being given the heart of a murdered child; and a 29-year-old lesbian fast-food junkie who became a heterosexual vegetarian after being given the heart of a teenage girl. Also, a man discovered that he had inherited some personality traits from his wife, such as liking baking and shopping, after she had donated a kidney to him. Some academics have developed theories to explain the phenomena, which it is claimed can affect at least 10 per cent of all people who have a heart, lung, kidney or liver transplant, although mainstream medicine remains sceptical (**FT236:18**). In essence, the theory is that memory does not sit only in the brain, as most materialists would argue, but somehow permeates the whole body.

Scientists have researched these phenomena, but the history involved provides much food for thought. It was towards the end of the 1950s that Dr James V McConnell performed a series of experiments at the University of Michigan seeking to demonstrate that memories could be stored in cells outside the brain. These involved common freshwater flatworms, *Dugesia dorotocephala*, which, like mammals and unlike creatures such as jellyfish, have a centralised brain. They are also able to regenerate themselves from tiny morsels of flesh: if you sever a flatworm's tail, within 14 days you will have an entirely new specimen – fully equipped with a brand new brain. Also, flatworms can be trained to remember a behaviour and perform it on cue; for example, electrical shocks can be used to teach them to respond to lighting cues by moving to a particular part of a petri dish. Therefore, if McConnell could demonstrate that flatworms could recall their training after their heads were cut off, and their brains grown anew, this would show that memories could live outside the brain.

And this is exactly what he found. He stated that: "The tail regenerates," and "showed as good a memory of the original task as did the heads." His research was published in the *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, a highly regarded psychology journal, which resulted in mentions in *Time, Medical World News, Newsweek,* and *Fortune*. Adding his charismatic personality to these perceived scientific accomplishments, McConnell appeared on several TV programmes, notably *The Steve Allen Show*. Instead of dazzling audiences with complicated science, McConnell captivated them with awe-inspiring concepts. [1]

BELOW: Dr James V McConnell, whose controversial experiments with flatworms could not be successfully replicated.

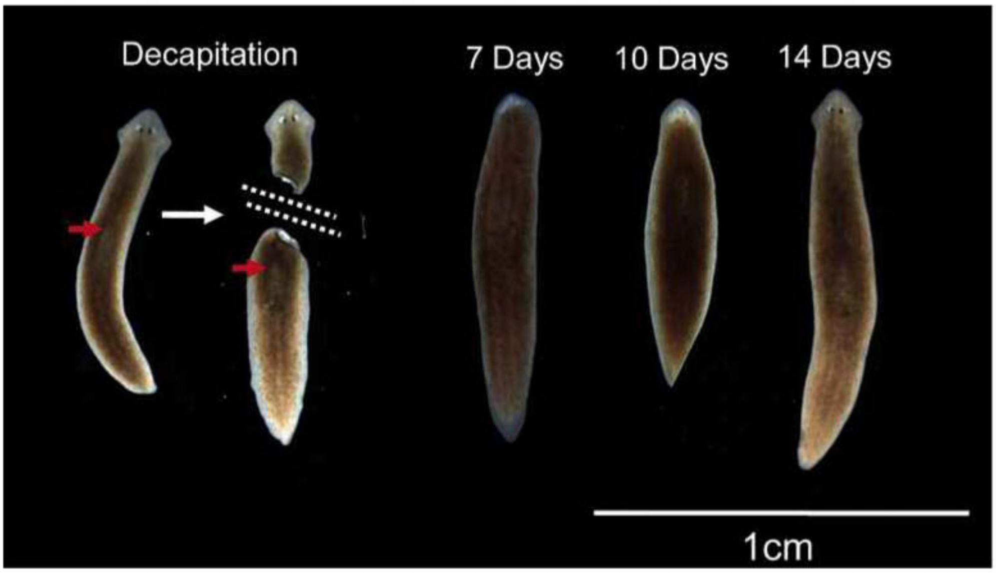


McConnell hypothesised that a form of Ribonucleic acid (RNA), which he called "memory-RNA", was the means whereby long-term memories could be stored outside the brain: since RNA encodes information, and since living cells can produce and modify RNA in reaction to external events, it might also be used in neurons to record stimuli. [2] To test this, McConnell fed ground-up bits of trained flatworms to their untrained brethren hence this being referred to as "the cannibalism experiment". McConnell claimed to find that the untrained flatworms performed behaviour previously learned by the trained flatworms: i.e. the dead flatworms' memories had transferred to the untrained flatworms.

Unsurprisingly, such spectacular research attracted the attention of competing universities, which sought to reproduce his study, as is appropriate to the scientific method. While some reported obtaining similar results, the majority did not, with many (rightly) faulting McConnell for his small sample size. They also argued that although the effect he reported was significant, it was also relatively weak. McConnell responded that other scientists had failed to reproduce his findings because they were unable to fully recreate his experimental conditions. [3]

Ultimately, McConnell's work was cast aside, considered to be a failure: perhaps an example of Charles Fort's observation that things in science are nothing more than the proper thing to wear for a while. Even so, it remained to some degree in public consciousness. For example, Alan Moore used it as a plot device in *Saga of the Swamp Thing* #21: believed to be dead, an autopsy on the Swamp Thing establishes that scientist Alec Holland did not turn into a plant mutant, but swamp vegetation had digested his mortal remains: it had absorbed his mind, memories, knowledge, and skills to create a new sentient being which believed itself to be Alec Holland. [4]

Later in life, in 1985, McConnell was the target of Theodore "the Unabomber" Kaczynski's 10th bomb, surviving the explosion with mild hearing loss. He was one of the apparently random victims across the USA, but it is interesting to note that Kaczynski was a student at the University of Michigan while McConnell was undertaking his memory experiments. McConnell died



ABOVE: Tal Shomrat and Michael Levin trained flatworms to travel across a rough surface to access food, then removed their heads. Two weeks later, after the worms' heads grew back, they somehow regained their tendency to navigate across rough terrain.

from a heart attack five years later at the age of 64.

McConnell's research proposed a chemical transfer theory that goes against current and past conceptions of memory, which explains, in part, the scientific community's rejection. Yet science cannot offer conclusive evidence about exactly how memories *are* stored. Currently, when discussing the underpinnings of memory, researchers are unlikely to go further than saying information is stored in the brain's neural networks, in the connections that enable the transmission of information from one neuron to the next. There is no specific answer to the question of how memories are encoded and decoded in the brain; some researchers prefer to focus on the sorts of modifications taking place in the brain when memory is stored, such as changes in neuron structure, so they might reverse-engineer memory formation, but this is not the same as establishing how memory is encoded, or where it is stored.

The publication of a paper in the *Journal of Experimental Biology* in 2013 by Tal Shomrat and Michael Levin of Tufts University re-opened the whole debate.[5] Levin, a developmental biologist well known for his work on limb regeneration, stumbled upon McConnell's work and decided to try out the first memory experiment as a side project, utilising the same basic principles. Levin was familiar with the considerable literature on aneural organisms — organisms without a brain to begin with – that can learn. Some, such as plants, single-cell organisms and even sperm, can learn to run mazes. Therefore, he thought, McConnell might have been at least partially right. Levin devised a simple training protocol and, critically, minimised human participation by using a fully automated process, thereby protecting his results from the scrutiny McConnell faced. The outcome was a set of results that appeared to bear out McConnell's findings. Levin was completely transparent, being prepared to make available the tracking data and Quicktime movies to other researchers for them to analyse themselves. However, he has yet to determine the mechanism behind his findings. He hypothesises that memories could spread beyond the brain because of electrical charges generated by cells in the rest of the body. Unsurprisingly, the response from the science community was mixed, and the historical baggage from McConnell means that the bar for acceptance will be set that much higher. McConnell argued for attention to be paid to those unusual things on the fringes of science that can disrupt the current way of thinking, and therefore arguably had a lot in common with Charles Fort.

The SAGA of THE
SWAMP THING

LEFT: One of Alan Moore's Swamp Thing stories played with the idea that one man's mind and memories had been absorbed by vegetation.

So if it transpires that Levin's work is reproducible and does ultimately gain acceptance, then might McConnell's reputation be revised to that of a pioneer?

I am no biologist, but reading what I have about McConnell's research it appears to me that he might have been on to something in his first memory experiments, as Levin may well have shown. But his later memory experiments, feeding ground-up bits of trained flatworms to untrained flatworms, were a "bridge too far". The most obvious difference between the two is that the former involved flatworms that continued to live after their heads were removed, while the latter involved flatworms that were dead and very mashed-up. Researchers most often iteratively build upon previous research, seeking to establish scientific breakthroughs and boundaries. Where difficulties arise is when they go past a boundary and the research does not "work" (i.e. have successful/publishable results) for whatever reason. This, I suspect, is the situation McConnell found himself in; and his hubris, celebrity and perhaps self-delusion, caused him to publicise the results nevertheless.

This brings me back to the "cellular memory" examples that I quoted at the beginning of this article. All involved living organs, even though some donors may have been technically dead. This means that there is more in common with Levin's and McConnell's first memory experiments, and nothing in common with McConnell's later memory experiments. Levin, therefore, could at least be pointing in the direction of where an explanation for the phenomena will be found; but I suspect that this will be many, many years in the future.

A final thought: in some future sci-fi universe, where brain transplants have become commonplace, is the brain being donated to the recipient, or is the body of the recipient being donated to the brain? And will the brain donor's memories become those of the recipient with none of the recipient's memories retained? FT

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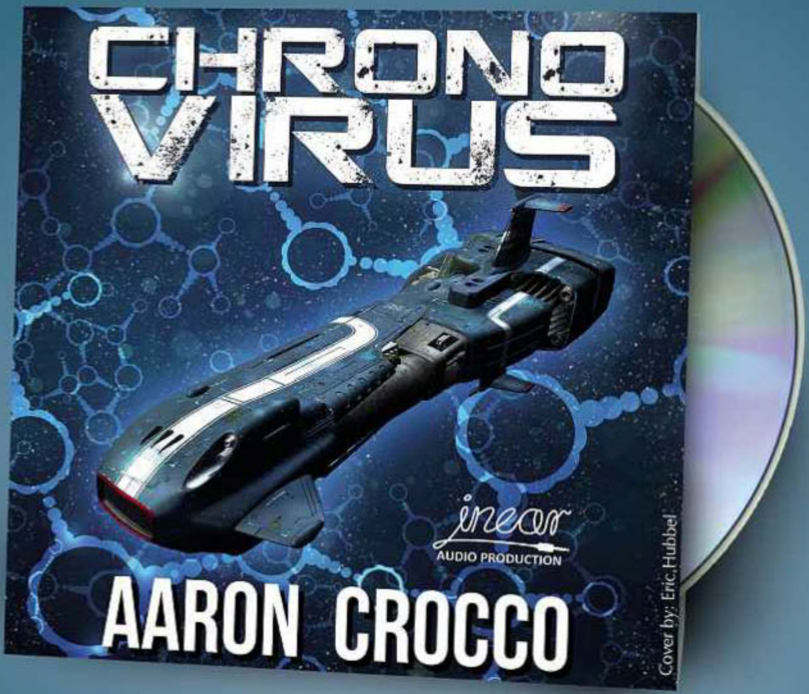

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Beyond the walls of Bedlam

Interpretations of madness have moved on from the demonic possessions of the Middle Ages and later excesses of black bile to our century's more 'rational' approach

This Way Lies Madness

The Asylum and Beyond

Mike Jay

Thames and Hudson 2016

Hb, 256pp, illus, refs, ind, £21.95, ISBN 9780500518977

This immaculate, copiously illustrated companion to the 'Bedlam: the Asylum and Beyond' exhibition at the Wellcome Collection in London uses the Bethlem Royal Hospital (popularly designated Bedlam) as a microcosm with which to approach the changing philosophical, social, economic, and moral attitudes towards mental illness.

The origins of Bedlam date from the 13th century, when madness was often interpreted as the torment of demons or a sin-induced temporary illness. This religious interpretation expanded to include physical sources – excesses of black bile and humoural imbalances symptomatic of diseases or heredity, or the stresses of everyday life.

By the 17th century, conditions for the patients at Bethlem were deplorable; the inmates overwhelmed the hospital's limited staff, and treatments and therapies were practically nonexistent.

King George III's 1788 affliction of madness and the subsequent attempt on his life in 1800 by James Hadfield, a mentally unbalanced soldier, helped revive public debate about mental illness in England, and Enlightenment philosophies led to new theories of madness and to revolutions in therapy. The 18th century interpretations of the causes of insanity, including phrenology, palmistry, physiology, and physiognomy, were eventually replaced with more inclusive views of the causes and treatment of mental illness. The expansion of asylums during the Industrial Revolution (the movement of populations into the cities tore apart families, classically the only support for the mentally ill) increased the strain on caretakers and doctors; as a result, many 'incurables' were straitjacketed and isolated, beaten and chained.

Advances in medical science presented potential solutions to mental illness. Psychology provided neurologists and psychiatrists with a greater understanding of the workings of the mind, and increasingly complex criteria resulted in new diagnostic categories. Psychiatrists began to redefine madness as symptomatic of genetics or social conditions, or both. The asylum was transformed from a space of incarceration and punishment to one of therapy and rehabilitation. Most notably, argues Jay, madness was redefined when, as a result of the First World War, "previously healthy young men in their thousands develop symptoms that formerly had been seen only in those with acute nervous illness: hallucinations, paralysis, uncontrollable tremors and even hysterical blindness."

Insanity was not a result of heredity or mental debilitation; it was something to which anyone could succumb.

> "Electroshock therapy and lobotomy were viewed as preferable to sterilisation"

Tragically, inhumane treatment of patients continued even within the framework of this modern civilised era of reform. Psychiatrists experimenting with electricity introduced electroshock therapy to induce semi-catatonic states in problematic patients.

In the United States, neurologist William Walter Freeman and his colleague James Watts introduced frontal lobe lobotomy. However extreme electroshock therapy and lobotomy were viewed, they were considered preferable to the sterilisation programme suggested by the British Eugenics Society, or the more extreme solution of Nazi Germany, wherein those diagnosed mentally ill were systematically murdered.

Mid-century studies by Irving Goffman, Michel Foucault, Thomas Szasz and RD Laing led to criticism of abuses of authority in the mental health system; Szasz in particular questioned the entire foundation of the reality of madness, accepting those who are mentally ill or defined as such only if they were "troublesome or unproductive or refuse to share the beliefs of those around them."

Postwar, pharmaceuticals gradually replaced chains and straitjackets. Pharmaceutical therapy was seen as a corrective to electroshock lobotomies.

It soon became apparent that pharmaceuticals were an imperfect solution, but debilitating side-effects were dismissed or perceived as an acceptable cost. The introduction of antipsychotics and tranquillisers reduced the population of inmates in mental hospitals significantly, leading to closures worldwide.

Sedatives and antidepressants are now taken in large numbers by otherwise sane members of postindustrial societies, due in part to an industry devoted to private-sector profits. The prior model of the asylum as an institution of either incarceration or of treatment has now extended into everyday life, fragmented into the workplace, the school and the home.

One can argue that nearly everyone suffers from some form of pathology. Undiagnosed individuals can commit heinous acts, as the media testify, and insane individuals can use the structures of civilised society – money, politics, religion – to reach unparalleled levels of power and commit acts far more horrible than those committed by the mentally ill.

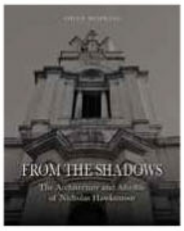
Some pathologies, insanely destructive when coupled with unchecked power, are mysteriously given free pass within civilised society, while the weakest and most infirm are treated with caution, suspicion, distrust and fear, when they're not disregarded or ignored.

Clinical insanity is just that: insanity that has been determined by society to serve no function beyond distraction, to the self, to others or to both. The

Continued overleaf

Shadowy man

Hawksmoor has not always been viewed through a psychogeographic lens



From The Shadows

The Architecture and Afterlife of Nicholas Hawksmoor

Owen Hopkins

Reaktion Books 2015
Hb, 344pp, illus, plates, notes, ind, £22.50, ISBN 9781780235158

Most people with an interest in psychogeography will have heard of Nicholas Hawksmoor, whether from Iain Sinclair's *Lud Heat* or from Peter Ackroyd's 1985 novel. But which Nicholas Hawksmoor? There have been many versions: Sir Christopher Wren's personal clerk; the surveyor for the Commission to Build Fifty New Churches; and the unfashionable architect, largely forgotten in the 19th century following his death in 1736.

With *From The Shadows*, Owen Hopkins deftly explores how Hawksmoor's work has been understood in his lifetime and since then.

As Architecture Programme Curator at the Royal Academy of Arts, Hopkins has a vast knowledge of his subject. He is an excellent communicator, sharing the technical detail of Hawksmoor's buildings in a way that is accessible to the lay person. His love for Hawksmoor's work makes *From The Shadows* a pleasure to read.

Hawksmoor's use of shadow is an important theme, and high-quality photos and plans help to bring the subject to life. For me, the reproduction of his perspective view of St Mary, Warwick, is almost worth the price of the book alone.

Because of the interest in Hawksmoor, particularly his London churches, it is easy now to see the value and importance of his work.

Hopkins doesn't shy away from the controversy surrounding Hawksmoor's Baroque style, nor the fact that he was largely forgotten before the revival of interest in the 1920s. He tracks the work of Kerry Downes, Wayland Young, Elizabeth Young, and The Hawksmoor Committee in bringing the architect's work back to prominence.

Hopkins explores Sinclair's work and Peter Ackroyd's influential novel, particularly the belief that Hawksmoor's churches have a dark magnetic pull. He is very effective in putting this mythic narrative in the context of previous understandings of Hawksmoor's architecture. However, he is not uncritical.

Frustration is evident in some of Hopkins's discussion of Sinclair's interpretations. This comes, I believe, from a feeling that debates about Hawksmoor have become dominated by this perspective, rather than a critique of a psychogeographic approach *per se*. In fact, Hopkins finds commonalities between his position and Sinclair's, for example in how the churches are linked across the city.

This is a significant book. Hopkins has a highly developed understanding of how buildings such as St Mary Woolnoth and Christ Church, Spitalfields, work in the cityscape. *From The Shadows* will be useful to anyone with an interest in Hawksmoor and the British Baroque, psychogeography and the way his churches became so influential, or the embodied experience of monumental architecture in general.

Steve Toase

Fortean Times Verdict
PSYCHOGEOGRAPHERS' FAVE ARCHITECT RE-EXAMINED **8**

Continued from previous page

forms of destruction perpetrated by those deemed 'necessary' to the functioning of society are often rationalised and defended as difficult decisions made within difficult situations, or the least destructive options demanded by humanity's greed, stupidity and violence.

As Jay observes, the walls of Bedlam are largely symbolic: they are the dividing line between acceptable and unacceptable madness.

Eric Hoffman

Fortean Times Verdict
MADNESS HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED, IT SEEMS **9**

Cold War Anthropology

The CIA, the Pentagon and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology

David H Price

Duke University Press 2016
Pb, 452pp, bib, notes, ind, $29.95, ISBN 9780822361251

Beginning in 1967, a series of journalistic investigations showed that during the first Cold War with the Soviet Union, the CIA had tried to use, influence and control large swathes of American life. Book publishing, art, psychiatry, student organisations, newspapers, magazines, charities and even the Hollywood dream factory were incorporated into the anti-Communist crusade (or global expansion of American capitalism: take your pick). And so was anthropology.

This book works in two directions. With what has been learned of the CIA's activities in American anthopology since 1967, it goes back to the early post-war years and tries to unpick the CIA's activities in the years leading up to the exposure of the Agency's network of funding front organisations.

This is a detailed and impressive piece of research, little of which is surprising now.

Seeking to understand areas of the world which were largely *terra incognita* to Americans, the Agency funded anthropological research. It did this using its fronts, or through friendly corporate third parties, such as the Ford Foundation, en route promoting the accommodating and nobbling the careers of the recalcitrant. If the information thus acquired had much impact on American foreign policy, little evidence is shown here. (The Pentagon is also involved but the book is mainly about the CIA.) More damaging to anthropologists, it used 'anthropologist' as cover for its officers and agents, with the result that in parts of the developing world 'American anthropologist' became synonymous with the hated CIA.

The second track is a detailed account of the politics of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) after the CIA's role was exposed in 1967, with various radical groups trying – and failing – to detach it from the state's influence and introduce professional limits on research which could be of use to the American military-intelligence state, the dual-use anthropology in the book's subtitle.

The problem for the general reader is that this story is largely about people; and after Margaret Mead and Talcott Parsons, how many American anthropologists do you know? So the second half of the book, about the politics of the AAA, was a grind and will be, I suspect, for anyone not *au fait* with the personnel involved.

Robin Ramsay

Fortean Times Verdict
IMPRESSIVE WHILE DETAILING CIA INVOLVEMENT IN ANTHROPOLOGY **8**

The Language of the Corpse

The Power of the Cadaver in Germanic and Icelandic Sorcery

Cody Dickerson

Three Hands Press 2016
Pb, 76pp, $17.50, ISBN 9781945147036

From the famous "necropants" to legends of walking corpses, for centuries death and dead bodies have played an important role in the magical and folk beliefs of Scandinavia and Iceland. Cody Dickerson's treatise offers a brief survey of sources that suggest the ways in which the omnipresence of death in the mediæval world could create "a great need for some men and women to interfere with the perceived order of life."

Without intending to rehash the scholarly debate over the role of paganism in mediæval magic, it should still be noted that Dickerson is much more accepting than the academic consensus view of the idea that magical practices in Christian Europe have a strong pagan element. He ties together historical, literary and grimoire sources from first-century Germany to 19th-century Iceland as examples of what he sees as a (distorted, fragmentary) "Óðinnic legacy."

The bulk of the book consists of examples of these fragments. This is where Dickerson's free-wheeling approach comes into its own; there will be at least one new tidbit of information for anyone interested in the topic of mediæval (and post-mediæval) folklore, sorcery or attitudes toward death. From ghosts appearing in the forms of animals to highly involved necromantic rituals, with accounts of burial practices and pagan beliefs in between, the collection of sources here is fascinating, even if it doesn't necessarily demonstrate the connections Dickerson believes exist.

At only 76 pages, The *Language of the Corpse* is brief, briefer when you consider that it doesn't really get going until page 11, but it's packed with nuggets of interest. As a basket of interesting glimpses of mediæval and early modern society, it succeeds, but the larger question of whether these instances of magic and religious belief relating to death are connected other than by the natural importance of the subject matter remains unproven – indeed, mainly unaddressed. It's a good read, but it's hard not to be left wanting something more in-depth.

James Holloway

Fortean Times Verdict

TOO SHORT BUT FASCINATING LOOK AT SCANDINAVIAN CADAVERS **8**

Pick a card, any card

A collection of essays and fictions reveals the genesis and development of Austin Osman Spare's occult practice.

Lost Envoy
The Tarot Deck of Austin Osman Spare

Lost Envoy

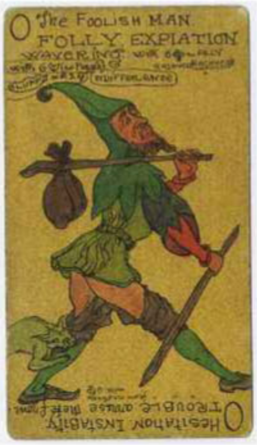
The Tarot Deck of Austin Osman Spare

Ed: Jonathan Allen

Strange Attractor 2016
Hb, 336pp, illus, £30 + pp from strangeattractor.co.uk, no ISBN

Strange Attractor published Phil Baker's biography of Spare in 2011. I confess to being not that knowledgeable about Tarot and less inclined to believe in its powers of revelation. However, *Lost Envoy* does a fine job of describing the history of card and Tarot reading.

At the time of Baker's biography, Spare's Tarot deck was unknown to both biographer and publisher. Jonathan Allen's introduction tells the tale of its rediscovery. Spare had entrusted the deck to Magic Circle founder member Herbert J Collings in 1944, some three years after what Baker termed 'Hitler's Revenge', the night of 10 May 1941, when Spare's studio was destroyed by the German raid which also laid waste to a large part of Elephant and Castle. He moved to the Brixton basement where he would remain for the rest of his life.



Analysis of the deck dates the cards' production to 1905–06 and links it to the mainly working-class entertainment of 'cartomancy' rather than to the more esoteric, middle-class use of Tarot cards popularised by the 1909 Rider-Waite-Smith deck. Allen here speculates that Spare may have come into contact with Arthur Edmund Waite through the artist Corinne Pamela 'Pixie' Colman, a mutual associate of Spare's friend, the suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst touched on in the chapter by Helen Farley, 'Austin Spare and the Ages of Tarot'.

Gavin Semple looks at the role Tarot played in the development of Spare's magical practice and suggests that his interest in Tarot began in his childhood. He also links Spare's Tarot design to a number of other Tarot and cartomantic sets available in the earlier years of his life, and illustrations show the influence some of these packs had on Spare's own.

Included in the book is an excerpt of a 1951 article Spare penned for the *London Mystery Magazine*, 'Mind to Mind and How, by a Sorcerer'. In it, Spare expounds the predictive aspect of cartomancy. At the end of this piece, Spare's comment resembles Alan Moore's notion that when he hit a mid-life crisis at 40, he decided to call himself a magician, a magician being someone who works symbolically through art, music etc to convey meaning that may be outside language much in the way that William S Burroughs saw writing as 50 years or so behind art. Spare states: "Scientists will never solve or prove anything relating to the foretelling of the future: it is a work for 'artists'. Science may subsequently prove more fully what artists have already discovered."

Phil Baker reappears to described and analyse the symbolic and inscribed elements of Spare's pack, describing it as the moment when he encountered old school occultism, some time after being a neophyte within Crowley's Argentum Astrum and also being integral to his disavowal of the same and creating his own individual occult practice Kia Zos.

Arthur Ivey and Jonathan Allen explain how the deck ended up in the Magic Circle's archive. Sally O'Reilly writes a short piece of speculative fiction regarding the relationship between Spare and Sylvia Pankhurst which I could have done without.

The book contains full reproductions of Spare's Tarot and is elegantly produced, but the most interesting piece is Alan Moore's attempt to divine the intent and significance of Spare's Tarot using Aleister Crowley's and Freida Harris's Thoth deck. Reading Spare's deck with reference to the Thoth deck and the kabbalah, he elaborates Spare's individualism as his primary source of power. He argues that the working-class Spare went against the grain of middle-class occult posturing.

Moore states: "In Spare's rough deck, in Spare's rough club raised in defiance of the stultifying magical conventions of the day, we see the bravery and the self determined Valour of his vision… Its significance to us must surely be in the example that it sets, or in its truest route to magic is an inward path, and one that we must pave for ourselves".

Spare sitting in his dishevelled Brixton basement amongst his cats and paintings may have more to reveal to us about magickal practice than Crowley in Boleskine, Cefalú or shooting up heroin in his Hastings boarding house.

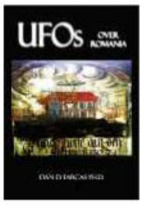
Peter Simonson

Fortean Times Verdict

SPARE'S MAGICAL OUTPUT GETS A WELL ROUNDED APPRAISAL **9**

Lantern man

From Transylvanian signs and wonders to modern-day Romanian UFO encounters



UFOs Over Romania

Dan D Farcas; Ed: Philip Mantle

Flying Disk Press 2016
Pb, 182pp, illus, notes, bib, £10.00, ISBN 9780993492839

Modern UFO encounters in Romania are much like cases reported elsewhere, but this representative selection shows how they relate to the local customs and traditions of the country's different regions.

Farcas notes that UFO-like phenomena are nothing new. His grandmother told him that over 100 years ago in her village there were sightings of "the man with the lantern", who was seen floating over the rooftops and, in one instance, frightened horses.

A good number of 16th and 17th century sightings of comets, meteors and meteorological phenomena encouraged people to read them as signs and wonders. UFO-like craft are also depicted on old church walls. The most striking is of a disc-shaped object with 10 sections floating over a large building, in the Monastery Church, Sighisoara (Transylvania). Gullible commentators have equated this with the legends of Dracula to speculate that blood-sucking aliens visited the region, but Farcas gives room to the opinion that it depicts Ezekiel's Old Testament vision. Whatever they depicted, an Ezekiel-like vision occurred in the Summer of 1904 in the Transylvanian Western Carpathians. An old man in the fields at night saw a spinning wheel of fire emerge from the horizon and quickly approach him. As it came nearby, the wheel turned into a man who starred at the witness for a long time. This was regarded as a 'sign' – of what we don't know.

In January 1913 there was a flurry of flying objects regarded as Russian reconnaissance aircraft, but Farcas doesn't think they were caused by terrestrial aircraft or celestial phenomena. This was at a time when Britain had a similar airship panic, which was attributed to German airships.

Farcas goes on to detail a wave of UFO sightings in 1968, and summarises the most significant sightings in the following decades. He also mentions the organisations and people who investigated these cases, in particular the work of the Association for Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena (ASFAN).

There are chapters devoted to military cases, close encounters, alien contacts and abductions. Farcas takes a look at the folkloric, spiritual and religious dimensions of Romanian ufology before devoting the last chapter to differing explanations for this phenomenon.

The range of sightings and experiences echoes those in other parts of the world, and Farcas says we have to accept them as 'real' – but the problem is what type of reality? He rejects many assumptions of what he calls the primitive extraterrestrial hypothesis, instead he suggests that there are hypercivilisations that live in parallel with our own. He notes that the inhabitants of such realms may have become, '... immortal, maybe time and space do not matter to them, they may have moved into a pervasive virtual reality and so on.' Whether you agree with that or not, Farcas certainly presents a great selection of intriguing Romanian encounters and experiences.

Nigel Watson

Fortean Times Verdict

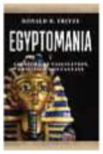
A THOUGHT-PROVOKING LOOK AT ROMANIAN UFOLOGY 8

Egyptomania

A History of Fascination, Obsession and Fantasy

Ronald H Fritze

Reaktion Books 2016
Hb, 444pp, refs, bib, index, £25, ISBN 9781780236391



Every age imagines its own Egypt, described by the publisher's blurb as "a land of strange gods, murky magic, secret knowledge, marvellous pyramids, enigmatic sphinxes, monumental obelisks, immense wealth and mysterious mummies." This is not a history of Egyptology, but of the *idea* of Egypt as conceived by ancient scholars and Church fathers, and as presented in popular culture. While 'mania' suggests an unhealthy obsession, Fritze intends 'Egyptomania' to be merely a more emphatic term than Egyptophilia.

Sensibly, the book starts with a brisk overview of three millennia of Egyptian history, to clarify how subsequently it has been distorted and mythologised. The Bible shows that the Children of Israel saw Egypt as a favoured and fertile land, the granary of the world, but also a land of bondage and oppression. Even then, it was regarded as a mysterious land of magic – both by the Hebrews and the ancient Greeks, the latter visiting as tourists at least since the time of Hecatæus (c.550–476 BC) and Herodotus (c.484–425 BC). By then the Old Kingdom was more distant than the Roman Empire is from the present day. The monuments have stunned and intrigued visitors ever since.

Pharaonic Egypt fell to Christianity, and the meaning of hieroglyphics was lost, enabling them to be misinterpreted as magical sigils, right up to their eventual decipherment in the 19th century. Islam conquered Egypt in the seventh century and Islamic scholars were fascinated by what they found, but three centuries of Christianised oblivion separated them from the ancient traditional culture. For the Church fathers, Egypt was a land of false gods. St Augustine credited the Egyptians with great learning, although he insisted that learning was pre-dated by the wisdom of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, while Hebrew was the earliest form of writing.

Then there was hermeticism, a religious and philosophical movement developed out of the writings attributed to Hermes Trismagistus, which promised salvation through secret magical knowledge gained by initiation and intense study. This eventually merged with Platonism, Neoplatonism, Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism to make an exotic stew. Hermes Trismagistus was a semi-divine sage identified variously with Moses, Imhotep or Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom and knowledge, whom the Greeks equated with their god Hermes. As Thoth invented writing, it was thought Thrice-Great Hermes invented hieroglyphics.

Fritze surveys the bewildering variety of 'Egyptian' rites dreamed up by the Rosicrucians, Freemasons and Theosophists, and takes us on an entertaining tour of fringe and alternative history set in the Land of the Nile. Extreme diffusionists believed farming, writing and civilisation started in Egypt before spreading across the world. The pyramids, of course, have inspired all sorts of speculation about how they were built, whether they were prophecies in stone or some sort of power plant. A closely argued and critical chapter deals with Afrocentrism and the notion that Egypt was a black civilisation.

Egyptomania was given a tremendous boost by Napoleon's expedition in 1798, which led to the monumental *Description of Egypt* and the discovery of the Rosetta Stone (the key to deciphering hieroglyphics). Novels took up Egyptian themes, such as the Mummy's Curse, that long predated the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. A chapter is devoted to Howard Carter's discovery and the 'Tutmania' subset of popular Egyptomania, and another chapter to the scores of novels and films dealing with Egyptian themes that appeared in the decades after the opening of the boy king's tomb.

Paul Sieveking

Fortean Times Verdict

AN ENTERTAINING TOUR OF IMAGINARY EGYPTS 9

ALSO RECEIVED

A selection of coffee-table books for the festive fortean

The Voynich Manuscript

Edited by Raymond Clemens

Yale University Press 2016
HB, 336pp, illus, ind, £34.99, ISBN 9780300217230

The enigmas of Beinecke MS 408 – more usually known as the Voynich Manuscript, after Wilfrid Voynich, the man who purchased the mysterious mediæval book from the Jesuit order in Rome in 1912 – have been rehearsed in these pages on a number of occasions (**FT130:42-46**, **260:58-59**, **345:38-43**). Of uncertain authorship and ownership – although we now know that it was not written by Roger Bacon or part of the library of John Dee – written in what appears to be an unknown language, containing beautifully rendered images of unidentified plant species and baffling drawings that seem to refer to alchemy and astrology, the book has driven countless researchers to hatch increasingly baroque attempts to 'crack' it over the past century. Until recently, you'd have had to make a trip to Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library to peer at MS 408; now, though, you can hold it – or at least a reproduction of it – in your hands. This isn't the much-reported and prohibitively expensive facsimile prepared by a Spanish publisher but a nicely produced and affordable hardback presenting full-size photographs of every page, including the elaborate fold-out sections, for comfortable perusal; wide margins mean you can even add your own annotations (perhaps it will be an FT reader who finally unlocks the manuscript's mysteries). There are excellent essays, too, on the Voynich's provenance and production, alchemical connections, and cryptographical attempts to decipher the text.

Deadpool: Drawing the Merc with a Mouth

Matthew K Manning

Titan books 2016
Hb, 184pp, illus, £35.00, ISBN 9781785654282

From the sublimely impenetrable to the deliberately ridiculous: a lavish coffee-table book (it's a big book: you'll need a big coffee table) celebrating Marvel's Deadpool, one of the few comic-book characters of recent years to attain the levels of popularity usually reserved for old-timers like Superman or Spider-Man. Deadpool's penchant for fourth-wall-breaking wisecracks and self-reflexive post-modern gags is matched by much of the artwork on display: parodies of iconic comic-book covers (Max Fiumara's take on Frank Miller's *Daredevil* #187 is one highlight among many), the co-opting of other artistic traditions (a Renaissance pieta, a Norman Rockwell *Saturday Evening Post* cover, a Hokusai print) or the insertion of our anti-hero into various inappropriate literary or cinematic texts (from *Moby Dick* to *Forrest Gump*). The artwork is reproduced beautifully, serving both to show off the many talents on display and send you off in search of some classic issues. Matthew Manning does a good job at tracing the character's surprising development from throwaway Nineties villain to cult figure – a status cemented by 2016's equally surprising hit movie – telling the story with the help of insightful contributions from writers like Fabien Nicieza, Joe Kelly and Mark Waid. The rather glaring omission, for a book so concerned with the endless visual possibilities offered by the character, is the lack of input from the many artists who have brought Deadpool to life; perhaps they are believers in the 'show, don't tell' approach, but it would have been nice to hear from them.

Tarzan on Film

Scott Tracy Griffin

Titan Books 2016.
Hb, 224pp, illus, further reading, ind, £29.99, ISBN 9780857685681

Edgar Rice Burroughs's ape-man has been a staple of popular culture since his first appearance in 1912. ERB followed up his *Tarzan of the Apes* with a further 23 novels, but the character – in the manner of Sherlock Holmes before him and James Bond after – was too big to be constrained by one medium, swinging successfully from the printed page to comics, radio and, pre-eminently, cinema and television. The first Tarzan film, *Tarzan of the Apes*, appeared as early as 1918, a reasonably faithful adaptation of the source material filmed in Louisiana, with the swamps and bayous standing in for the African jungle; it was a huge success. The latest, 2016's *The Legend of Tarzan*, was shot in UK studios, utilised CGI to create its mythic landscapes, and was a critical and commercial disappointment. Scott Tracy Griffin's book covers these and the more than 50 films and TV series in between, providing a useful overview of one of the most successful moving image franchises of the last 100 years; but while its copious illustrations remind you how much you'd like to revisit Johnny Weismuller and Maureen O'Sullivan in *Tarzan and His Mate*, the text is dull as ditchwater, full of too many not-so-fascinating facts about various actors and lacking any cogent analysis of the films or what made them so successful for so long.

John Matthews
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The Incredible Hulk

Created by Kenneth Johnson, US1977-82
Fabulous Fims, £119.99 (Blu-ray)

These millennials don't know how good they've got it. They can walk into a cinema, plonk their money down and be transported to comic book movie heaven for a couple of hours. They can watch the Avengers go toe-to-toe with Ultron, witness Doctor Strange traverse mystical dimensions, or see the Hulk, well, smash… It's a golden age!

Back in the day, or the late 1970s, we young Marvelites had only Universal's *The Incredible Hulk* TV series; and while this was in some ways a big deal (and a massive hit), from another perspective it was a weekly exercise in disappointment, a constant reminder that the world of our beloved comic books simply couldn't be translated into live action, whatever Stan Lee might promise in his 'Bullpen Bulletins'. Instead of a monstrous emerald behemoth, we got an ex-body builder painted somewhat unevenly green and sporting a fright wig made of yak hair. Loveable Lou Ferrigno was often shot from below, or in slow-motion, to make him look bigger and stronger, and while there's no doubt he could throw the odd fake bear or gorilla a fair distance one would have feared to see him go up against a Hulkbuster. It took a special form of youthful cognitive dissonance to accept that what we saw on our TV screens was the same tragic monster, a Cold War creature born of the nuclear age, envisioned by Lee and Kirby. But tragedy there was – centred on the lead performance of the wonderful Bill Bixby, who imbued his David (none of your alliteration here, Bruce) Banner with a genuine sense of pathos as a haunted everyman-on-the-run trying to protect all around him from the beast within.

The set-up lent itself perfectly to the formulaic world of Seventies TV; every week, the itinerant Banner, in search of a cure for his condition, would show up in some town or city, find himself involved in a drama, have a couple of Hulk-outs and eventually put everything right before moving on once again to the strains of one of television's most poignant theme tunes. With hindsight, *Hulk* stands up as intelligent, well-made TV of its time, and producer/director/writer Kenneth Johnson deserves praise for his approach to the material; by taking the *Batman*-style camp out of comic-book TV he laid some of the groundwork for the genre's future as a valid form of all-age entertainment. This hulking great set collects all five seasons (82 episodes), which scrub up very nicely in HD, and a handful of extras, but not the later NBC TV movies.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
PERFECT COMFORT VIEWING FOR RAINY AFTERNOONS **8**

The Darkest Universe

Dir Tom Kingsley, Will Sharpe UK 2016
On selected UK release and VOD

Zac Pratt's (Will Sharpe) annoying younger sister Alice (Tiani Ghosh) has vanished, along with her boyfriend Toby and their canal boat. Zach embarks upon a search, using leaflets, posters, and social media, while complaining about the police's seeming lack of engagement in the case. Flashbacks – including Alice's 'meet cute' with quiet oddball Toby (Joe Thomas) – reveal life with Alice to have been not particularly easy; she is, in fact, rather a problem in Zac's eyes.

The Darkest Universe is visually low key and naturalistic, until at the 35-minute mark a series of images create a more sinister tone, but are they real, fantasy or – as a direct edit might imply – just a dream or nightmare?

As time goes on and the search becomes more desperate, Zac begins to unravel. Living out of his car, he travels the waterways putting up posters and recording video diaries (which become ever more elaborate) that he posts to his website blog. He even has a physical battle with Toby's physicist brother, Charles, when he quits the search in frustration with Zac's obsessions.

There's a clash of outlooks here, enunciated in a debate between Zac and Charles as 'things don't happen that cannot be explained' against 'things happen that remain unexplained'. There's a vague fortean feeling running throughout the film, including a fantasy sequence that includes a UFO invasion, but this is at heart a realist piece with a perhaps unreliable narrator who has a warped perception of his world.

It's atmospheric and amusing, with fine performances, and while the lack of definite answers might be annoying, that's actually part of the point. By the end, there is an explanation of a sort offered, in the shape of a strange eyewitness account of the disappearance of the narrow boat. It is up to the viewers if they want to accept it. For Zac, and Toby's father and brother, it seems to be enough for them to achieve closure.

At one point, however, Toby's father (Chris Langham) thinks Alice and Toby just became so vague that they faded away. Given the evidence presented during the course of *The Darkest Universe*, it is as good an explanation as any.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict
MILLENNIAL MUMBLECORE WITH FORTEAN UNDERTONES **5**

Daemos Rising/ The Mindgame Saga

Dir Keith Barnfather, UK 1997/2004
Reel Pictures, £9.99/£12.99 (DVD)

Back when the BBC seemed to have abandoned *Doctor Who* there were a number of unauthorised-but-legal video spin-offs from the classic programme. Today, with a whole new pantheon of Doctors, they are historical curiosities, but at the time they were a remarkable expression of fan-fic, with enthusiasts getting professional actors and directors to work on very low budget productions to fill the gap left by the BBC. The direct-to-video films exploited the loophole that characters and monsters could be licensed directly from the writers who had created them without infringing BBC copyright, though the Doctor himself can't be named.

Daemos Rising (2004) is a sequel to *Downtime* (1995; see review in **FT337:65-66**). The Brigadier's daughter Kate Lethbridge-Stewart (Beverley Cressman) arrives at an isolated country cottage to find weird stuff happening with a sculpture nearby, and former UNIT operative Douglas Cavendish (Miles Richardson) nervous, confused, drunk and obsessed by the occult. (The voiceover at the start is provided by his father Ian Richardson.)

There's a lot of intended-to-be-atmospheric haunting which could do with being a bit more subtle, as they discover that a Dæmon is returning to Earth. Can they save the planet? The story is largely a two-hander, though a ghost from the future (Andrew Wisher) also appears, to warn and to help. The Dæmon is suitably scary.

In *Mindgame* (1997), a Sontaran (Toby Aspin), a Draconian (Miles Richardson again) and a human (Sophie Aldred, effectively playing Ace, though un-named) suddenly appear in a prison cell, brought there by an alien who wants to pit them against each other to find the strongest ally with whom to attack our galaxy. The three refuse to fight, team up to trick and kill the alien (who looks like a werewolf in need of a haircut) – and our plucky human somehow masters the controls of the alien trans-mat to send everyone back where they came from.

The half-hour script (by Doctor Who stalwart Terrance Dicks) and the performances are somewhat clichéd. Far more effective is the *Mindgame Trilogy* (1999), three 10-minute soliloquies in which the three come to terms with their fates. The Sontaran (now played by John Wadmore) awaits his glorious death on the battlefield while puzzling over whether his alliance with the others betrayed the essence of being a Sontaran. The Draconian, enthusiastically quoting Shakespeare (and sounding spookily like the actor's dad), is about to be sent off into solitary exile for the rest of his life. And Sophie Aldred heart-rendingly acts her heart out as her character realises her spacecraft is crippled and she is about to die.

Both DVDs have interesting extras (The Making of… etc), but neither has sub-titles.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

FLAWED BUT INTRIGUING WHOVIAN SPIN-OFFS **5/7**

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com; @revpeterlaws)

THE HILLS HAVE EYES

Dir Wes Craven, US 1977

Arrow Video, £17.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

Dir John Carpenter, US 1976

Second Sight, £20.99 (Blu-ray), £15.99 (DVD)

THE KILLING OF AMERICA

Dir Sheldon Renan, US 1981

Severin Films, £14.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

Pushing boundaries is the bread and butter of exploitation movies and this month we have a trio of films that each, in its own way, took audiences to new levels of on-screen violence.

First up it's *The Hills Have Eyes*, in which an American nuclear family is raped, brutalised and murdered by another sort of American nuclear family: cannibalistic mountain men twisted by radiation. It's not as unsettling as his earlier *Last House on the Left*, but director Wes Craven made this as a calling card for a fresh wave of horror. He famously heralds this new era of cinematic shock by showing a *Jaws* poster on screen, torn in half. Of course, a few years later Sam Raimi did exactly the same thing in *The Evil Dead*, featuring a torn poster of *The Hills Have Eyes*! Still, there are moments in *Hills* that are still pretty gruelling.

Also out on Blu Ray is John Carpenter's tense and stylish *Assault on Precinct 13*. This tale of a police station overrun by an LA gang isn't particularly brutal, but it did contain one notorious scene that many audiences choked over at the time. It's worth remebering that the drowning of the little girl in Universal's *Frankenstein* was cut from the film until the 1980s, but here in 1976 Carpenter has another little girl murdered on camera; shot with a silencer right through a Vanilla Twist ice-cream. Killing children is rare in cinema, and even Carpenter regrets including it; yet it's interesting how a YouTube search of this film throws up this scene more than any other.

Finally, we have *The Killing of America*, a mondo crime documentary which I first saw as a teenager (slipped to me silently on a pirate video copy). Sheesh, this film freaked me out back then – so much so, that I was actually nervous about seeing it again. It's a relentless and depressing study of America's decline into violence, and from the off we see real corpses and people getting shot. Yet what really lingers in the mind are moments like the horribly mundane interview with the serial killer Ed Kemper, who happily chats about having sex with decapitated heads. The central thesis of the film is that post-war America was tumbling into an epidemic of murder and violence. After a jam-packed parade of clips and horror stories, accompanied by deadly serious narration, it's difficult to argue with. Watching it now, it's still disturbing, but that's precisely because it's *not as disturbing as it should be*. In terms of graphic content, this footage is tame compared to the shock and gore sites now found on the Internet. You're left thinking that while the murder rate in America has thankfully gone down, the desire (and opportunity) to see real life clips of the dead or dying is higher than ever. Which, I guess, is disturbing on a whole other level.

Masters of Venus

Dir Ernest Morris, UK 1962

BFI, £19.99 (DVD)

Even when this children's series was made in 1962 the writers and director must have known how far from scientific reality it was. In fact, it's piffle from beginning to end – but if you just accept that and enjoy it for what it is, it's actually quite fun.

Young teens Pat (Amanda Coxell) and Jim (Robin Stewart) seem to have the run of the tiny British rocket facility led by their dad, Dr Ballantyne. Two saboteurs disable the somewhat elderly security guards at the gate and get into the control room. Pat and Jim (who are very bright and scientifically knowledgeable) realise that the only way to stop the rocket exploding is to take off, with an unconscious two of the intended crew of four. The saboteurs are discovered to have six fingers on each hand (we never actually see the six fingers, but never mind). The rocket is en route to Venus, but just as Dr Ballantyne and the couple of others manning the entire Interplanetary Rocket Base send them a message that whatever they do they mustn't land, there's a communications blackout and the kids don't hear it – and land on Venus.

One of the crewmen goes out exploring. Although they rightly make a big thing about the airlock, instead of space helmets they wear little more than surgical face masks. They wander around easily, though it might not have been widely known in 1962 that the surface temperature of Venus is over 450°C. But they should have known that the glorified office chairs on the rocketship ought to have head-rests for support during the high-G rigours of take-off…

After a series of mishaps, our heroes meet the Venusians. They've been living there for millennia, but originally came from Atlantis, where they were persecuted for having six fingers and driven out (note the moral lesson about discrimination). They're split into two factions: those who want to get in touch with Earth in the spirit of friendship, and those who don't. The latter faction are plotting not only to kill the Earthlings but to use their rocket to send a deadly virus back to Earth to wipe out the entire human race. The children of the leader of the first faction help release our gang, who after a few more alarums and excursions head safely back to Earth. The knowledge, clear thinking and sheer pluck of our two teens save the Earth, a year before Doctor Who and his granddaughter first appeared.

It's tosh, but it's fun tosh, and surprisingly well done. The kids aren't cringe-worthy, the black-and-white format simply adds to the charm and the whole thing is immeasurably better than ITV's *Pathfinders in Space* from two years earlier. It's also an important historical record: a product of the Children's Film Foundation which made Saturday morning cinema films for kids in the Sixties and Seventies; *Masters of Venus* was originally shown in 15-minute episodes spread over eight weeks.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

SIXTIES SCI-FI FOR THE KIDS IS OF ITS ERA, BUT FUN **7**

I Am Not a Serial Killer

Dir Billy O'Brien, UK/Ireland 2016

On UK release and VOD from 9 December

"Well," I thought as I pondered the film's curious title, "neither am I; let's move on." Actually, the central character here – John Wayne Cleaver (Max Records), the most alarming case of nominative determinism since Ed Balls – is convinced that he really *is* serial killer material. But when the real deal starts terrorising John's bleak, snowbound mid-Western home town it all gets serious.

At its heart, this is a coming-of-age story about a basically decent kid who, because of his idiosyncrasies, gets pushed to the margins of his peer group. Thirty years ago it would have been written by Stephen King and set to classic rock 'n' roll; but that won't cut the mustard for The Youth Of Today, so what we get is a nice line in sardonic humour, a healthy disrespect for authority figures, and an emo sensibility. That's the part of the film which works really well; when it turns into a game of cat and mouse between John and the murderer it loses its individuality. It does boast, however, an unexpectedly satisfying ending and a heart-warming dollop of family bonding over the embalming table.

Daniel King

Fortean Times Verdict

A QUIRKY, WITTY AND GRUESOME LITTLE MOVIE **7**

SHORTS

FIRSTBORN

Metrodome, £12.99 (DVD)

Charlie and James are a young couple who realise that their daughter Thea is able to see into the afterlife and has attracted the attention of malign spirits. It's a decent if not outstanding contemporary horror, clearly intended as a British version of *Insidious*; and, as a fan of that film, I'm being complimentary when I say that Nirpal Bhogal's *Firstborn* matches it at times. The intention is to try and marry a realistic London setting, featuring a mixed-race couple and their child, with more traditional British horror imagery of weird old ladies and dark woods. It's an interesting idea and on a visual level it works, but with regard to the acting what you get is a jarring clash of styles. Antonia Thomas (very good) and Luke Norris (pretty good) play it straight as the young couple, in keeping with the kitchen-sink feel, but Jonathan Hyde and Eileen Davies as the two older characters are a lot more… well, theatrical; and when the two styles mix, the artifice of the whole enterprise becomes quite apparent. Worth a go though, because it does manage a few genuine chills in among the more mechanical 'Boo!' moments. **DK** **6/10**

PANIC

Available on VOD from 21 November

Panic could be described as *Taxi Driver* meets *Rear Window* in north London, but it has a richness and emotional pull that mark it out as a quality film in its own right. The theme of an ordinary man out of his depth in a sea of vice and desire is the stuff of classic film noir and although *Panic* isn't quite that, it is a terrific British thriller – the best I've seen in a long time. The performances – especially by Gyasi, and Pippa Nixon as the femme fatale – are uniformly excellent, and perhaps most remarkable of all the film is set in a recognisable London. It's rare to come across a film which hits its targets so precisely and for that writer-director Sean Spencer deserves great credit. He's one to watch and so is his film. **DK** **9/10**

THE DRILLER KILLER

Arrow Video, £19.99 (Dual Format Steelbook), £14.99 (Blu-ray)

Most of Abel Ferrara's films have a Marmite-like divisiveness, so his notorious, low-budget 1979 debut (not counting some Super 8 shorts and a porno memorably entitled *Nine Lives of a Wet Pussy*) isn't likely to be to everyone's taste, even after all these years. *The Driller Killer* fell foul of the 'Video Nasties' panic, perhaps more on the strength of its poster than the movie itself, which is a grimy mash-up of grindhouse violence and Warholian arthouse stylings. Ferrara appears in front of the camera too (under the name of Jimmy Laine), playing the titular psycho, a struggling and unhinged artist shacked up with a pair of lesbians (cue gratuitous shower scene) and being driven mad by the terrible punk band rehearsing in the apartment next door. Unable to take it any more, he haunts the New York streets with his battery pack and power tool in search of vagrants to drill. There are a couple of pretty graphic sequences, but mostly this is a grim trudge through urban squalor, half-baked Catholic imagery, and truly awful music. The film does have a couple of memorable moments and the night scenes shot on the streets around Union Square conjure glimpses of a vanished city, but *Taxi Driver* this ain't. Arrow, as usual, provide top-notch extras. **DS** **6/10**

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Dear FT...

letters

Saunière's wealth

I enjoyed reading the Hierophant's Apprentice's excellent summary of the problems with Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln's seminal work, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* [**FT343:52-53**] and although I agree with around 98 per cent of the article, I wish to add two caveats. Firstly, some researchers have suggested that the amount of money Saunière seems to have accumulated could not have been acquired purely by the illicit selling of masses (known as simony). Of course, precise figures are difficult to come by but, even by conservative estimates, Saunière, who came from a very impoverished background, managed to transform himself into a multimillionaire by today's standards. If coming into that kind of money could be achieved just by selling masses, then why didn't a few more priests jump on the bandwagon? After all, the extent of the recent pædophile priest scandal has shown that corruption within the Catholic Church is not usually confined to just one man.

Secondly, some recent books, primarily by Lynn Picknett and Clive Price, have demonstrated that, although the Priory of Sion was not as ancient or far-reaching as suggested by Baigent et al., it could still have been a genuine secret society and not merely the 20th century hoax dreamed up by Pierre Plantard.

Geoff Clifton
Solihull, West Midlands

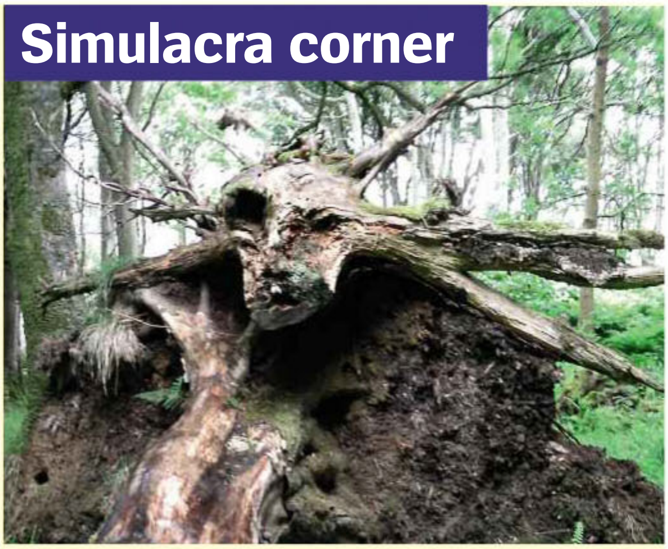
Stendek

Regarding the Enrique Mercado UFO case, one of several cases involving alien food [**FT332:46**]: his full name was Víctor Enrique Mercado Orué, and he died on 9 December 2003, aged 75. I met him on three occasions – through the courtesy of Mexico City UFO researcher Zitha Rodríguez Montiel – in 1986, 1987 and 1995. Though I can't assess the accuracy of his claims, he struck me as a sincere and humble man. His account includes the word "Stendek", which was the name the aliens from the planet Mu (in the MIT system) gave to the human race.

Many readers will recognise the word (with the spelling STENDEC) as being part of the last message from *Star Dust*, the British plane that vanished in the Andes in August 1947. (Wreckage of the plane began to emerge from the glacial ice in the late 1990s.) The spelling *Stendek* was later used as the title of a prominent UFO magazine published in Spain from 1970 to 1981. I wrote a couple of articles for this, which I sent to Sr Mercado after our first meeting. (This was before I had read his typescript; the word did not come up when I visited him.) He had been unaware of any other usage of the word, and was astonished to see it in the name of a magazine.

Richard W Heiden
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Simulacra corner



Lori Silvan came across this wooden personality while on holiday on the Isle of Mull.. *We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com.*

MH370

I was delighted to read the piece on MH370, which has become, as you rightly say, "one of aviation's greatest unsolved mysteries" [**FT345:12**]. Just a couple of points: the article quotes Larry Vance as asserting that, as regards the recovered flaperon, "The force of the water is really the only thing that could make that jagged edge that we see".

This is not so. In fact, Mike Exner of the Independent Group has argued consistently and in detail that the distinctive pattern of damage on the flaperon (on the trailing edge only) is consistent with high speed flutter which would detach it from the aircraft as it fell out of the sky in a steep descent and not, as Vance asserts, when the plane ditched. The recently recovered Pemba debris also exhibits the same tell-tale pattern of damage to the trailing edge, but not to the leading edge, and analysis of it has revealed that this particular flap was not deployed at the time, also undermining the conclusion that the aircraft ended its flight with a controlled ditch.

The report also claims that First Officer Fariq Abdul Hamid signed off, "after which radar and then satellite tracking lost all contact."

In fact, Malaysian primary radar continued to track the aircraft as it flew back across the Malaysian peninsula and detailed analysis of the final exchange seems to point to Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah as speaking the final recorded words from the cockpit.

Mark Fox
Kidderminster, Worcestershire

Ever louder

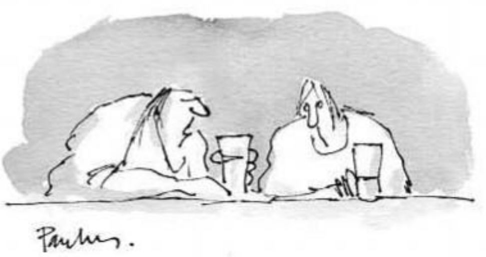
Whilst reading PJ Morrison's pleasant article on megalithic sites in Holland [**FT344:74-77**] I was struck by the many connections between hammers and thunder across various cultures. One of the biggest changes to culture over the centuries is the rising level of noise. Church bells now have to compete with planes, trains, wars, factories, and so on. Thousands of years ago there was none of this 'din'. Probably the loudest noise you could have heard was thunder – God's anger (and no wonder they thought it was God). And the projection of all that noise into human equivalence? The hammer.

Simon van Someren
London

Touché!

I can't confirm the myth that the front benches in the House of Commons are two swords' lengths apart [**FT246:23**], but a BBC documentary broadcast in 2015 showed the MPs' cloakroom. Each coat hanger has a ribbon provided to hang up your sword, so maybe the story isn't so far-fetched.

Kirsty McMonagle
Ayrshire



"I hate the metric system, I can't half-inch anything."

PAUL LEE

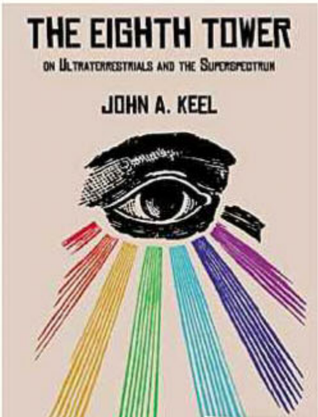
John Keel's worldview

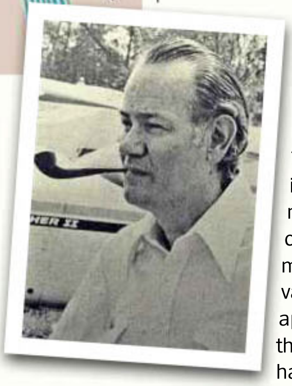
I do not believe an accurate estimation can be made of John Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies* [**FT346:48-49**] without considering that "fifty percent of the original material was edited out by faceless editors in tiny cubicles," as Keel reported in the afterword to the 1991 IllumiNet Press edition, material which Keel then "salvaged" and "reshaped" into *The Eighth Tower* (1976). To get the fullest picture of Keel's magnum opus, it is important to understand the book's original concept and know what was deleted from the manuscript.

The ideas contained in the first two sections of *The Eighth Tower* are fairly easy to summarise: Keel, accurately or otherwise, describes the electromagnetic spectrum and the limitations of the human mind and senses to comprehend, harness and manipulate it. He then posits "a hypothetical superspectrum" in which the electromagnetic spectrum is wholly contained. This second spectrum, he says, is "composed of energies known to exist but that cannot accurately be measured with present-day instruments… It is a shadowy world of energies that produce well-observed effects, particularly on biological organisms (namely people). This superspectrum is the source of all paranormal manifestations from extrasensory perception (ESP) to flying saucers, little green men, and tall, hairy monsters. It is hard to pin down scientifically because it is extradimensional, existing outside our own space-time continuum yet influences everything within our reality."

To illustrate the scope of this hypothetical second energy spectrum, Keel uses the same analogy he used in *Operation Trojan Horse* (1970). When a boy with a microscope "peers at a drop of water on a slide, he is, in a sense, looking into another world quite separate from his own reality. In 30 seconds of his time, he can watch the entire life cycle of a microbe – its birth, its multiplying, and its death. Because of its very small size, if the microbe had a sense of time, those 30 seconds would seem like 30 of our years… The microbe swimming about in his drop of water knows nothing about the universe outside his immediate environment, and the boy exists in a whole other different dimension." We and our world are the microbe and the drop of water; the superspectrum and its forces are represented by the boy, who exists almost, but not entirely, on another plane of reality altogether. Keel gives the name "ultraterrestrials" to the unknowable agencies he hypothesises may exist on the vaster planes of the superspectrum.

Thus, the brightly coloured blobs of light seen at night, which blink in and out of our skies and are visible one moment but gone the next, and which we call UFOs, may be, Keel says, no more than unknowable 'objects' briefly entering our reality from a much vaster realm of existence, just as the boy could prick an amœba with the tip of a pin and then withdraw it. The amœba, if it could comprehend and think, would have absolutely no context whatsoever for accurately understanding the object it briefly encountered. What we call UFOs "are extradimensional, not extraterrestrial" Keel says, and what we perceive as our future "already exists in the superspectrum", just as the entire life cycle of the amœba, which may seem like the equivalent of 30 human years to the microorganism on the slide, may only be only half a minute to the boy.





What mankind has called ghosts, satyrs, trolls, lake monsters, and hairy wild men throughout history may be little more than inadequate efforts by these higher agencies to communicate with human beings – or to convey, however ineffectively, a specific message to us. Are UFOs, leprechauns, and the dragons of ancient China little more than failed commercials or telegrams? As Keel stresses in *Operation Trojan Horse*, paradoxically, the boy with the microscope cannot communicate with the microbe, despite his vast superiority on all apparent levels. Thus, the 'higher intelligence' has to resort to other, more primitive stratagems. But even then, how can the boy ever be fully assured he has succeeded in communicating with so basic a form of life?

Keel's theory of what might be called a 'macroverse' was not a new one. In the specific area of ufology, scholar Meade Layne (1882-1961) theorised as early as 1950 that UFOs were interdimensional ships created and driven by "Etherians", beings remarkably like Keel's ultraterrestrials. Even Dr Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel, 1904-1991) published a children's book utilising the broad idea of a 'macroverse' in *Horton Hears a Who!* (1954). Ultimately, isn't the question of whether or not Keel's formulation of a 'superspectrum' as such has any scientific merit a question best left to contemporary physicists?

But Keel should have stopped while he was ahead. The book's final section is its weakest, as Keel attempts to apply his "superspectrum" theories in specific detail to prehistory and early recorded history, and stumbles so badly that the volume degenerates into, to use a term Keel likes, "jabberwocky".

Here, Keel launches into a clumsy argument regarding "the ancient gods", whom he believes were either the 'authentic' entities from the superspectrum that he calls "ultraterrestrials" or their artificially created, robot-like proxies and messengers. These "ultraterrestrials", or "gods", he says, mated with human women and so produced a race of "demigods" whose rule over the people of the Earth was, in turn, eventually usurped by their priests, who actually understood the "magical" workings of the superspectrum in a manner the demi-gods did not. Why did Keel attempt to tie his superspectrum theories to Earth's prehistory at all? Was Keel influenced for the worse by the commercial popularity of Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* in the late 1960s and early 1970s?

Keel then moves on to the actual Eighth Tower of the title, but never properly defines it. The closest he comes to definitions are "a kind of electronic time capsule that continues to function purposelessly millions of years later" which was originally built by "super earthlings", or "Titans" five million years ago, and "an energy transmitter" created by the same race to "broadcast to their biochemical slaves on biological frequencies" which has somehow survived the annihilation of its creators but is still functioning haphazardly today, so that it is, at present, a "senile machine playing out the end game". The specific idea of an 'Eighth Tower' as such comes from William Seabrook's *Adventures in Arabia* (1927), from which Keel quotes: "Stretching across Asia, from Northern Manchuria, through Tibet, west through Persia, and ending in Kurdistan, was a chain of seven towers, on isolated mountaintops, and in each of these towers sat continually a priest of Satan, who, by 'broadcasting' occult vibrations controlled the destinies of the world for evil."

Keel's Eighth Tower may be an actual construct or a metaphor, a "supercomputer" like the black monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), or, in some inexplicable manner, literally the conscious 'mind' of the planet Earth itself

(Ivan T Sanderson's theory, Keel reports). Keel's Eighth Tower theories also sound suspiciously like some of those expressed by Nigel Kneale in his screenplay for both the British television serial and 1967 Hammer film production of *Quatermass and the Pit* (the latter released as *Five Million Years to Earth* in the United States, perhaps significantly, since the term "five million years" crops up repeatedly in *The Eighth Tower*). Keel's vague tower also seems uncomfortably close in concept to the 'Control System' theorised by his acquaintance and correspondent Dr Jacques Vallee in *The Invisible College* (1975) and later books. But Vallee, a scientist, was insightful enough to leave his concept as sketchy and as broad as possible, and to present it in less melodramatic terms. It is well known that Vallee and his mentor and associate, the well-respected Dr J Allen Hynek, shared ideas with Keel, but which of them had the Control System/Eighth Tower idea first?

Keel also compares his 'Eighth Tower' to CG Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, but if Keel intended his concept to be something akin to Jung's, then he has done a very poor job indeed of describing it. Keel calls both Jung's collective unconscious and his own 'Eighth Tower' each writer's "personal devil theory", but in what sense is the very loose 'Eighth Tower' hypothesis a "devil theory"? In what sense was Jung's collective unconscious a "devil theory"? What exactly does Keel mean by terms like "devil theory" and "personal devil theory"?

Jung's oceanic collective unconscious was a vital, dynamic and 'positive' concept that he was rightly proud of and made the basis of all his later work, including his extensive study of alchemy. Plainly stated, in addition to the "personal unconscious" in each individual, Jung described the collective unconscious as "a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents." Though the collective unconscious was also the repository of the archetypes, those primordial 'motivators' of the psyche which Jung believed were semi-autonomous and partially controlling when "constellated", both the collective unconscious and the archetypes were 'beyond good and evil' as such. It is critical to keep in mind that both of these theories, each essential to Jungian psychology as a whole, were grounded directly in human biology.

So why does Keel blithely demonise Jung's collective unconscious and construe it as a force of darkness? Had Keel actually read Jung's admittedly difficult work, or merely skimmed it? "You and I are biochemical robots controlled by the powerful Eighth Tower. Our brains are programmed like computers, and many of us are suddenly and completely reprogrammed at some point in our adult lives," he writes. Our "free will", he says, is an illusion, and we are really nothing more than "slaves".

Keel often seems mentally agitated and paranoid in the book's final pages. A temporary fit of paranoia following a seemingly 'paranormal' or other highly unusual experience is understandable, but perversely formulating an entire cosmology with this kind of claustrophobic paranoia at its centre is another thing, especially when that cosmology is rooted in a series of radically speculative and rather hokey details about the state of life on Earth five million years ago (and Keel happily jumps from one mega-annum to another as if he were discussing months, years or decades instead of million-year periods). In *Daimonic Reality* (1994), Patrick Harpur, a Keel enthusiast who wisely ignores those parts of Keel's œuvre which deal with ancient history, calls Keel "close to madness" during those specific periods of his life when he was aggressively investigating UFOs.

Instead of providing theoretical answers, the last section leaves the reader with almost nothing but questions which Keel himself has raised and failed to further address: if Keel's "super earthlings" of five million years ago were capable of creating an apparatus of mass control like the Eighth Tower, why was it necessary for ultraterrestrial "gods" from the superspectrum to materialise on Earth a million years later? Are Keel's "super earthlings", who "flashed overhead in wonderful flying machines" and his later ultraterrestrial "gods" one and the same type of entity? If so, why doesn't Keel say so? Who and what were the "nonhuman culture of giants" that "once populated the Earth"? Who were "the Watchers" Keel suddenly refers to, who "the Guardians"? Are Keel's "Guardians" the same entities discussed in Meade Layne's *Coming of the Guardians* of 1954?

As it nears its end, the book begins to read like a series of sketchy notes for a pulp science fiction novel not unlike Edgar Rice Burroughs's *A Princess of Mars* (1917) or an extended fantasy like JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). Readers familiar with HP Lovecraft's shadowy 'Great Old Ones' may also perceive them lurking awkwardly behind Keel's "ultraterrestrials". Keel briefly mentions Richard Shaver and Shaver's hollow earth/detrimental robot pseudo-mythology, and occasionally sounds as preposterous as Shaver did even at his best. Sentences concerning "super earthlings" who "flashed overhead in wonderful flying machines" could have come straight from one of Shaver's early 1940s stories about Mutant Mion in *Amazing Stories*.

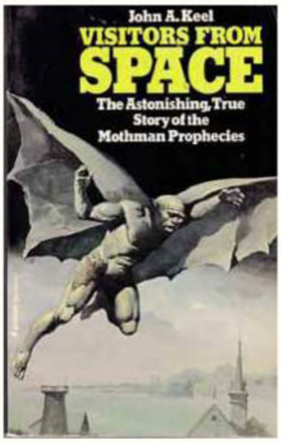
Here, as in his weaker books, once Keel begins discussing the "ancient" world and the "ancient gods", "demi-gods" and "priest-kings" he thought ruled over it, his ideas become muddled, his sense of the vastness of time collapses, and his writing, if intended as nonfiction, becomes so incoherent that it is impossible to follow or respect. Due to its contradictory last section, taken as a whole, *The Eighth Tower* is a poorly argued mishmash of ideas and thus stands closer to Keel's amateurish hackwork than it does to the best of his writing. Had Keel retained only the first and second sections edited out of *The Mothman Prophecies*, and abandoned or heavily condensed the third, a far stronger work would have resulted. It is also worth noting that almost every good idea explored here was already presented half a decade earlier in better form in *Operation Trojan Horse*, where Keel wisely left his conclusions open-ended and tentative.

Ultimately, when looking at the publishing genesis of *The Mothman Prophecies*, a great deal of the credit, perhaps most of it, has to be given to those "faceless editors in tiny cubicles" who wisely edited out "fifty percent of the original material" and actually shaped the remaining manuscript into the fortean classic we know.

Joseph E Barnes
By email

◆ The article on John Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies* was excellent and informative; but I would like to add a footnote which readers might find amusing. I have among my books a copy of the first UK paperback edition, published by Panther in 1976. The publishers seemed to think that the original title might not appeal to the UK market; so they retitled a book whose main argument is that UFOs are not extraterrestrial as... *Visitors from Space*. I sometimes wonder whether mainstream publishers of fortean literature have actually read the books that they publish.

Martin Jenkins
London


John A. Keel
VISITORS FROM SPACE
The Astonishing, True Story of the Mothman Prophecies

letters

Who's listening?

In Jenny Randles's observations on undercover surveillance and the Men In Black phenomenon [**FT342:29**], one passage, in particular, caught my attention. She tells us that in 1983 she was investigating the Rendlesham Forest UFO sightings case just as it made the front page of *The News Of The World* when, in her own words, she "received some strange phone calls with odd clicking noises". I have no doubt that she was subjected to some surreptitious snooping, but instead of a shady government agency might she have been an early victim of journalistic phone-hacking? This crime was ultimately the downfall of the aforementioned newspaper.

Simon Besson
Manchester

Deceiving the eye

Re William Gibson's misidentification of Volkswagen Beetles [**FT345:34**]: two other cars that could have been confused with UFOs were the American Astra-Gnome on 1956, which with its bubble top "looked like a prop from a science fiction movie…" (*The Beaulieu Encyclopaedia of the Automobile*, ed. Nick Georgano, 200, I.90), and the British Quasar-Unipower runabout of 1968, a glass cube on wheels (op. cit. II.1282).

Richard George
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Borley Church

Roger Morgan is undoubtedly right that accounts of music being heard from the organ of Borley Church (dedication unknown) in Essex could well be explained by hoaxing and pranksters [**FT343:71**].

He highlights a serious cultural problem that today afflicts not just Borley but all too many other locations of paranormal and folkloric interest. For once, the Internet cannot be blamed, public fascination in the story of the infamous Borley Rectory having endured over many decades since it was gutted by fire in February 1939 and demolished completely in 1946. Thereafter, attention focused upon Borley Church to which some researchers believed the ghosts had migrated. As the books of Harry Price and James Turner (who bought the Rectory site to grow mushrooms in 1946) reveal, Borley continued to attract curiosity seekers, eccentrics and a few pranksters for two decades but a fairly tolerant attitude prevailed.

After 1960 relatively little alleged paranormal activity was reported, but until the late-1970s the Church authorities adopted a liberal approach towards ghost hunting and remained prepared to let teams of serious researchers hold all night vigils in the building, which was often kept unlocked. Unfortunately, following BBC TV documentary *The Ghost Hunters* broadcast in 1975, Borley again became a magnet for the curious.

The scenes Roger Morgan recalls from the mid-1970s typified the problems that arose from a minority of sensation-seekers, churchyard hooligans, vandals, drug addicts and people with undiagnosed mental-health issues for whom Borley became a magnet. Their inevitable failures to conduct themselves properly within a church ranged from the semi-literate scrawling of fatuous comments in the church visitors' book (often casting a lurid light on their tastes and beliefs) to serious acts of damage inflicted upon the fabric, fittings and windows of the ancient building and the desecration of graves in the churchyard. A well-publicised low point occurred when punk rock musician David Vanian and a sidekick marched into Borley church one midnight waving a cane, disrupting the vigil and experiments being conducted by a party of American ghost hunters.

As a result the Church and Parish authorities reversed the previous tolerant policy and after 1979 the church was routinely locked and placed off-limits to ghost hunters. These restrictions were backed by the local community fed up with nuisance, noise and vandalism. Personally, I believe the Church could have handled things better, and initiated steps to manage the renewed public and media interest as it had done at points during the 1940s. However, this was beyond the limited resources available to a small congregation and community.

As to the ghostly organ music, about the only cogent evidence for its occurrence dates to the late 1940s and early 1950s and the experiences of the Revd Alfred Henning, the incumbent for Borley and Liston from 1936. In 1953 he told the ghost hunter Philip Paul (1923-2010) of hearing organ music from the church when it was empty, including on one occasion in 1947 when the sounds were also heard by a lady novelist. The Revd Henning also wrote and published his own book *Haunted Borley* (1948), which provided an unsensational account of some of his own unusual experiences as the serving rector.

As to other strange noises heard in the church, it is now recognised that many of these, together with feelings of coldness, are explicable by the existence of a large crypt, running almost the whole length of the building, which is subject to periodic flooding.

I tend to agree with the ghost hunter Andrew Green (1927-2004), who declared from the mid-1980s that "Borley isn't haunted" and with the Rectory and almost everyone connected with it now dust and ashes, what interest remains is purely historical.

Alan Murdie
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Southern panics

I was irritated (though hardly surprised) at the conclusions Theo Paijmans attempts to have us reach in "The Pre-War Monster Panics of 1938" [**FT337:30-31**]. Anyone who has lived in the American South all their lives knows that the black community there is more than capable of making up their own "haints" and "ghoulies" with which to scare one another without needing to point any accusatory PC fingers at white people. For example, back in 1992 I ventured into downtown Atlanta during a weekend-long black culture fest called "Freaknic" which was so massive that road travel was literally impossible within the metro area. After meeting my girlfriend, we ventured on foot into a large park to simply sit on the grass and observe the air of festive chaos around us. At one point a sizable crowd of roughly 200 black people came roaring down a nearby hillside, apparently in a blind panic, complete with screaming, shrieks, howls of terror, arms flung over their heads... I could not discern the source of the terror, so I accosted a straggler on the periphery of the crowd by the sleeve and asked what the trouble was. In a terrified panic he shouted, "Pit Bulls! Phantom Pitbulls!" before struggling free and fleeing over the next hill where the crowd had gone.

My girlfriend and I exchanged wry glances. Looking about we could detect no spectral dogs, though we did spot an exhausted-looking Chihuahua being carried past by its plump owner. We had a giggle at this, lit up a cigarette and sat back in the grass. A moment later, in the distance we could see the terrified mob from before rounding the crest of a faraway hill as faint cries reached our ears. Some minutes passed and we still saw no dogs capable of instigating such a panic and wrote it off to mass hysteria. Perhaps significantly, a little while later, a black fellow came up to me and pointed at the leaf I was holding. "That's poison oak!" he said, before smirking and running off. I twirled the (obviously non-poisonous) oak leaf by its stem between thumb and forefinger pondering the realisation that there are people who go around intentionally trying to instigate panic reactions in other people simply for their own amusement.

I for one do not appreciate the continual insinuations in the media that if one is white and lives in the American South one is automatically a racist. In Mr Paijmans's eagerness to put a racist slant on the urban legends of blacks in the South, he neglects the more likely scenario that these monster legends arose naturally from the black community out of tricks, jokes, and the made-up spook-stories of teenagers desperate for a laugh.

James Barnes
By email

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FORTEAN TRAVELLER

109. The Cutty Wren, Suffolk

On Boxing Day evening, it all goes a bit Wicker Man in the Suffolk village of Middleton cum Fordley. **MATT SALUSBURY** braved the cold, the dark and a side of blackface Morris dancers to find out what was going on...

Boxing Day, the day after Christmas, also known as St Stephen's Day, is named from the "box" – a monetary tip for the past year's service – traditionally given to the postman, the dustman, or the paperboy. It was the day the poor box in the church was opened and distributed, hence the name. (Nothing to do with a pugilistic sport, in case you were wondering.)

But there was one group usually left off the Christmas card lists of respectable folk and who weren't given a box on St Stephen's Day. These were agricultural labourers, the lowest of the low. They had no choice but to go in disguise at night and extort some sort of tip by means of what officious railway station announcers call "aggressive begging". Following the recent revival of a possibly ancient ceremony in a village not far from the Suffolk coast, St Stephen's Night has become the preserve of Morris dancers gone bad: in Middleton cum Fordley on Boxing Day, it's all a bit *Wicker Man.*

BELOW: The wooden wren, sheltering in the foliage on the end of a pole, is brandished aloft and paraded.

MATT SALUSBURY

ADRIAN SMITH

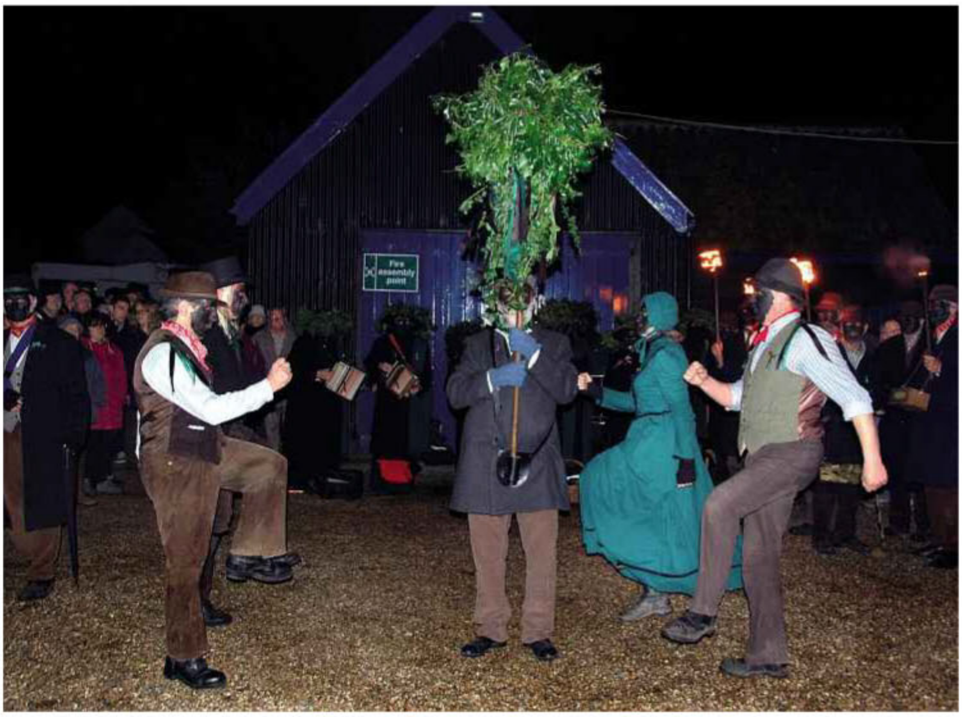
On a night illuminated by a Suffolk Moon so bright it blinded you to look at it, I was among a crowd of around 100 punters gathered in some excitement to witness the St Stephen's Night ritual of the Cutty Wren.

Originally, young agricultural workers would scour the local hedges and furze (an old English word for gorse bushes, still in use in East Anglian place names) in search of a wren. Sometimes the wren would be put in a cage among a thicket of foliage on the end of a pole. More often, the bird would be killed and nailed to the pole along with some greenery. Wrens spend much of the time close to the ground in hedges, so this simulated its habitat. The wren on the pole would be paraded around the village at the head of a troop of blacked-up Molly dancers, Molly dance being Morris dancing's evil twin from the East of England.

The East of England "Molly" variant takes its name from the "molly", one of the lead pair of the "side" or team. The side performing the Cutty Wren at Middleton go by the suitably chilling name of Old Glory. The Molly is usually a terrifying-looking, blacked up, older man in drag, wearing a poor Victorian woman's long dress and bonnet, with some distinctly male boots underneath. Forget embarrassing *Black and White Minstrel Show* blackface, Molly dancers look more like SAS commandos ready for a murderous night mission.

The Molly dancers' sinister look is emphasised by the fact that during their whole grim performance, they never, ever smile. Members of the side who aren't in a particular dance stand right in front of the audience staring straight ahead but avoiding eye contact, like a line of cops on "public order" duty. One member of Old Glory told me that in days of "pre-modern dentistry", you'd avoid smiling at all costs during "muggings" (begging expeditions) as a smile was "like a bar-code", the gaps in your teeth allowing the landlord or vicar to identify you. Another feature of Old Glory that sets them apart from the more genteel Morris teams of a traditional English summer is that they only ever dance on winter nights.

How old is the Cutty Wren? "Cutty" is believed to be an ancient word of Celtic origin. The famous tea clipper ship the *Cutty Sark* at Greenwich is named after the way too short – "cutty" is "short" or small"– child's linen undergarment or "sark" worn by Nannie Dee, the witch in Robert Burns's poem *Tam 'o Shanter* who appears on the ship's figurehead. Some trace the Cutty Wren ritual back to the Iron Age (possibly mythical) "Year King" who ruled for a year and who was sacrificed – probably not literally – at the end of each year to renew the crops.



ADRIAN SMITH

ABOVE: The Old Glory side dance in the carpark of the Bell Inn.

BELOW: A torch-lit procession through the village of Middleton.

There's a whole catalogue of Cutty Wren songs and poems; the oldest English version is thought to date back to at least the 14th century and possibly much earlier. The oldest written version is a 17th century Scots song, and there is an (English language) Irish Cutty Wren ballad as well as versions in Welsh, Breton and Manx. Before the Middleton Cutty Wren's opening dance, the man in blackface in a flat cap carrying the wren on the pole shouts out the best-known Cutty Wren song:

"We'll hunt the wren!"/Says Jack-of-the-Land/"We'll hunt the wren!"/Says everyone/The wren, the wren, the king of all birds /On St Stephen's Day was caught in the furze /Although he was little, his power is great /So up with the kettle and down with the plate!"

The kettle is a pub tankard, and the plate is the Molly dancers' collecting plate, although it's now a box on a strap carried discreetly under the arm of the "box man" who also carries the wren on a pole. He's extra tall for the purposes of gentle intimidation.

Old Glory's revived Cutty Wren at Middleton can be traced all the way back to 1993. We seem to be in the middle of a Cutty Wren revival. Days before I attended the Middleton Cutty Wren, Poet Laureate Carol Anne Duffy's new poem *The Wren Boys* was published in the *Guardian,* describing lads from the turn of the 20th century – the glory days of the Cutty Wren tradition – catching a wren and going begging. There's even an obscure short story from an official *Doctor Who* adventure book, in which the Second Doctor and his assistants Jamie and Victoria land in a suitably atmospheric Middleton on Boxing Day 1906 to find themselves in some sort of terrifying scenario.[1]

But going back (or forward) to our 2015 Middleton Cutty Wren, the absence of small children was noticeable. They'd been locked up to stop them getting nightmares at the sight of the terrifying Old Glory side on their silent, torch-lit funeral procession, interrupted only by the occasion single, solemn drumbeat. (When I'd enquired about the Cutty Wren at The Bell Inn earlier that day, one of the regulars described the forthcoming "frightening-the-children" procession.) A number of dogs, shut up indoors, saw the silent blackface march of the torch-wielding dancers pass by their living room windows and went *absolutely nuts*.

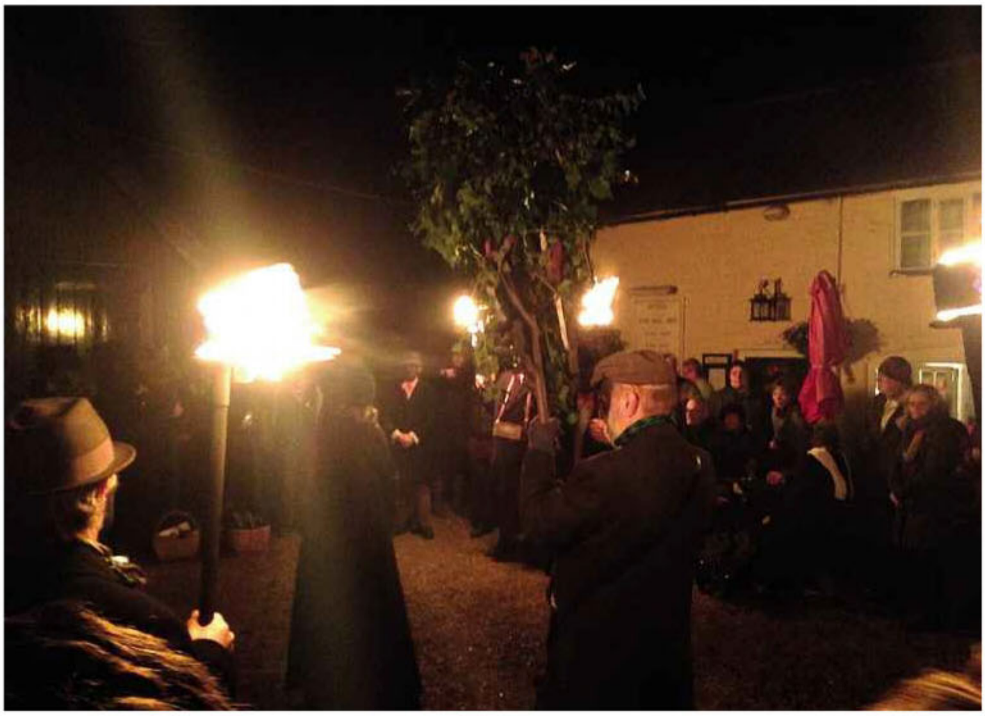
The Molly is a terrifying, blacked-up man in drag

The male Molly side was scary enough – the dancer from the lead pair who wasn't in drag wore a suitably gothic horror top hat, as did the deliberately non-entertaining Master of Ceremonies; but the all-girl band that accompanied them (Molly "orchestras" were traditionally all-female, and the women used to teach the dance steps) was just bizarre. They were blacked up and wore long black trench coats, with black veils around their broad-brimmed hats, which were decked with generous mounds of ivy and other foliage. This gave them the appearance of an evil chorus line from *The Muppet Show*; the orchestra played from deep in the shadows, adding to their sinister mystery.

After the short procession through the village, the dancers and punters formed up in the car park in front of The Bell Inn, which has a noisy gravel surface for some of the dances that involve deliberate stomping. "Stomping the Ground" is the title of one of the dances. Others include "Nelson's Revenge" and "The Buck", which realistically simulates rutting stags with horns locked in combat, complete with shouts of "Ooh!" that mimic the bellow of a male red deer. The deer rut throughout October, just down the road on the Westleton Heath RSPB reserve, is an annual tourist attraction.

"The Buck" is, of course, another excuse to unnerve people by simulating a fight. The dances are purposely graceless, jerky and plodding. A lot

MATT SALUSBURY



BOTH PHOTOS: MATT SALUSBURY

ABOVE: The wren is paraded as the Cutty Wren song is proclaimed.

BELOW: The female Old Glory musicians emerge from the shadows at the night's end.

The whole performance is a show of physical force

of dance moves involve burly blokes grappling with each other, because this whole performance is really a subtle show of physical force and intimidation designed to get the vicar, the squire, the landlord and the respectable shopkeeper to put some money in the box you thrust towards them.

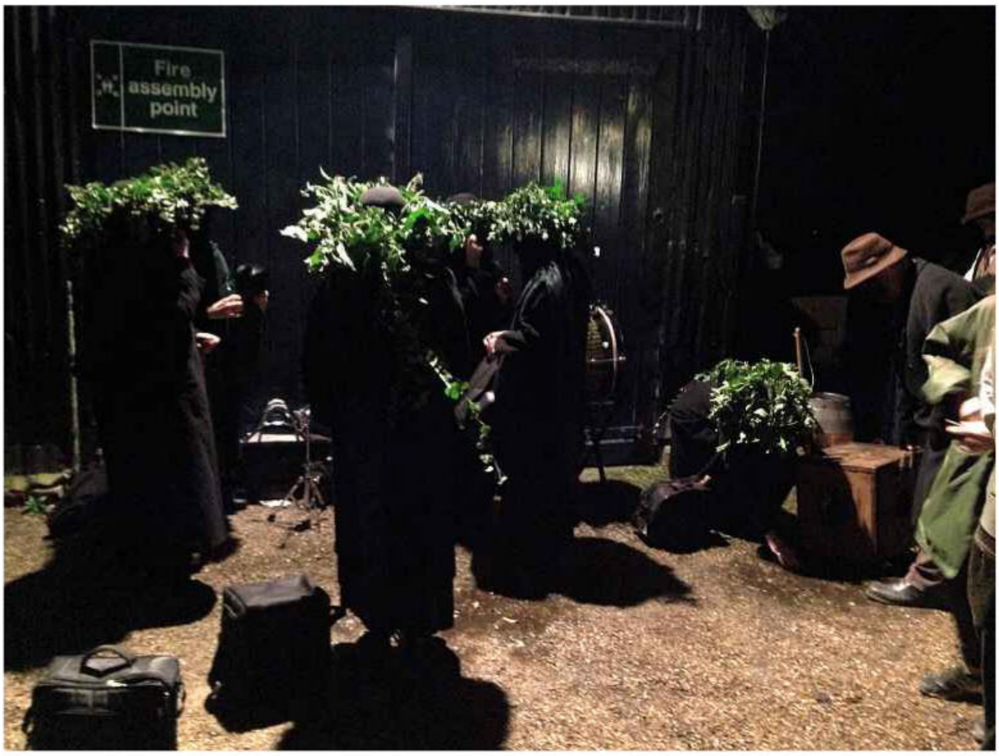
The MC, in his undertaker's top hat, introduces the first dance by explaining that: "We are but poor ploughboys… under my arm I have a small box." These days, though, the proceeds of the Cutty Wren go to charity.

The eight-strong female orchestra hidden in the shadows has a few "proper" instruments – tin whistles, accordions and a kettle drum – but the percussion section plays the sort of deliberately shambolic equipment you'd expect the families of "poor ploughboys" to come up with, such as washboards or an Australian-style "lager pole", a broom handle with bottle tops loosely nailed to it, which jangles when struck on the ground.

When the Cutty Wren's "wick lanterns only, no flash photography" convention is occasionally broken, the Old Glory dance team are fleetingly illuminated, revealed as men in late middle age in blackface, wearing the waistcoats and neckerchiefs of farm labourers circa 1900, with some horse brasses bearing the wren design from the old pre-decimal farthing coins. In their white shirtsleeves and trilby hats, they look more like one of the "ultraviolence" gangs escaped from *A Clockwork Orange* than the pagan villagers of *The Wicker Man*.

The man carrying the Cutty Wren on its pole tells the story of how Britain's migratory birds chose a King via a competition to see who could fly the highest. When the golden eagle showed up, all the birds dropped out, leaving only the wren, who'd just made it through the scrum of onlookers by accident. The wren won by riding on the back of the eagle, and became the Friend of the Poor, a symbol of resourcefulness triumphing over power. The retelling included some very modern references to bird focus groups and the Home Office granting Leave to Remain to bird migrants.

The Cutty Wren is part of an East Anglian revival of morbid Morris dancing. Old Glory sometimes team up with the local Rendham Mummers, whose performances include the play *Death Comes A Knocking*. Also from Suffolk Coastal District comes the blackface mixed Morris side Pretty Grim,[2] inspired by the dances of the Welsh border but with a goth-punk vibe. Their name comes from the fact that "the boys are pretty and the girls are grim." **FT**



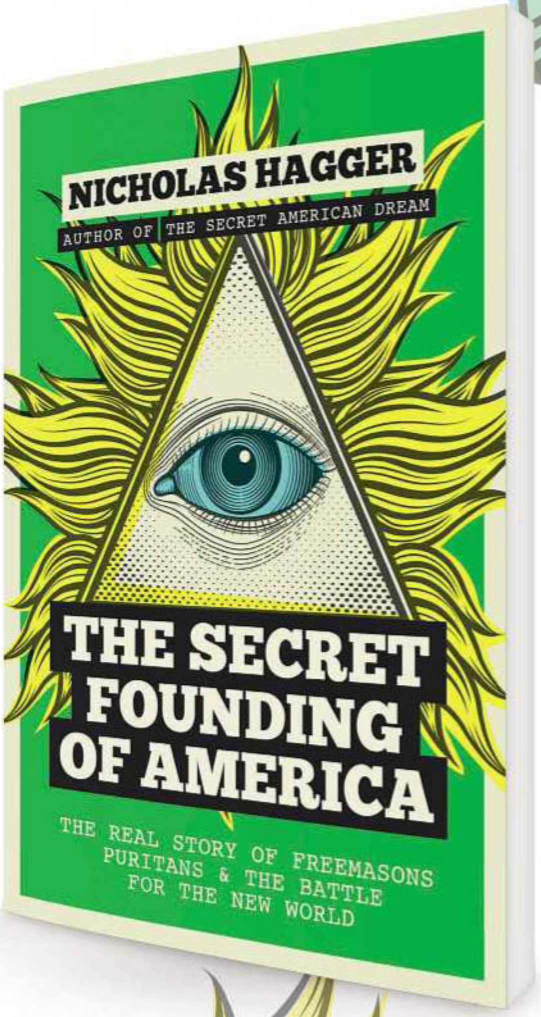
- The Cutty Wren usually assembles at around 8pm on St Stephen's Night (26 December) at the Village Hall, Middleton, Suffolk, IP17 3NG (also known as Middleton cum Fordley, not to be confused with the other Middleton just over the Essex border). There are no trains or buses on Boxing Day. Old Glory's website (www.old-glory.org.uk) features a calendar of events and some unsettling video from their previous Cutty Wren performances.

NOTES

1 "The Cutty Wren", *Doctor Who Short Trips: The Ghosts of Christmas*, BBC Worldwide, London 2008.

2 http://prettygrim.weebly.com.

MATT SALUSBURY is a regular FT contributor and author of *Mystery Animals of the British Isles: Suffolk* (2016) @MysteryAnimals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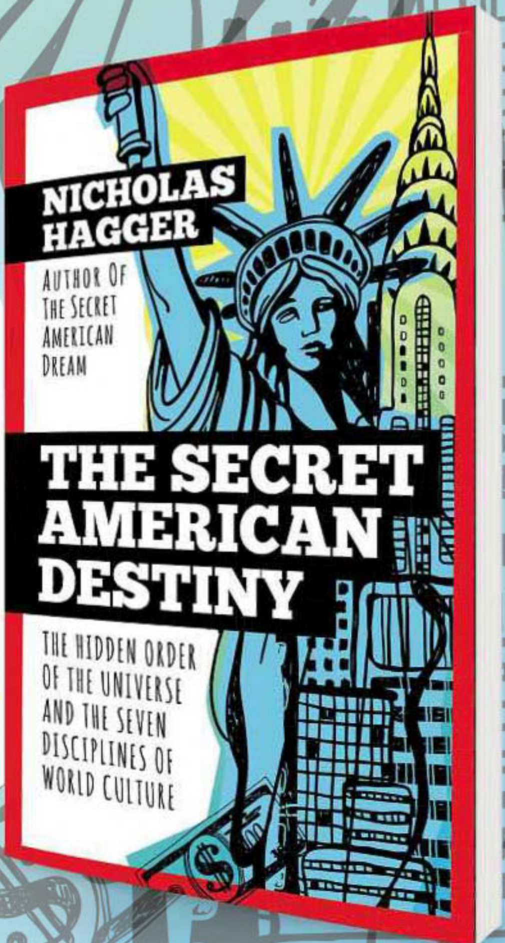
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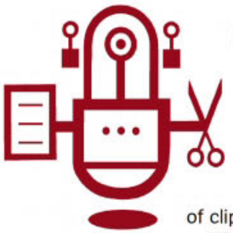

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

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PHENOMENOMIX CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

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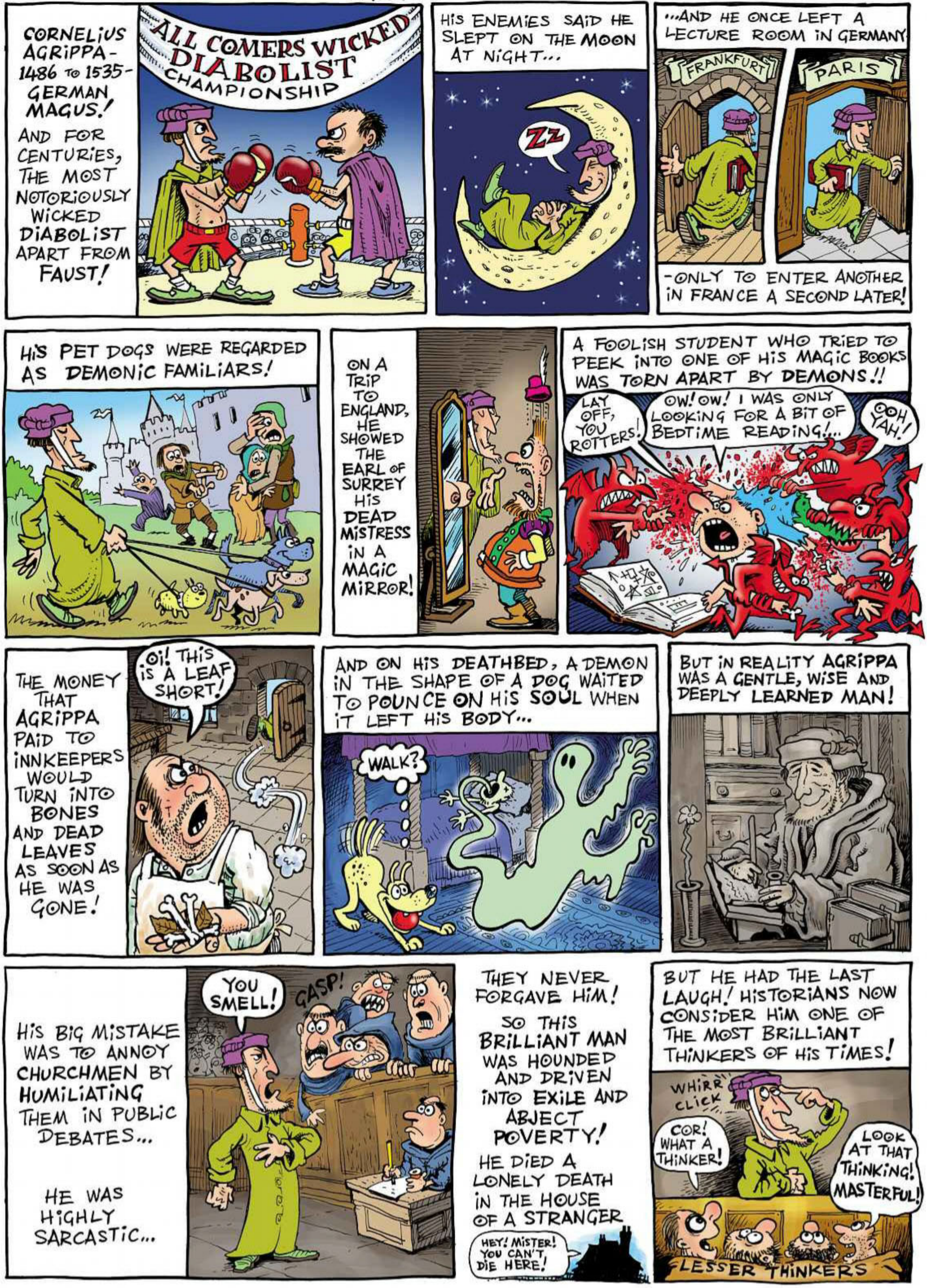
CORNELIUS AGRIPPA - 1486 TO 1535 - GERMAN MAGUS! AND FOR CENTURIES, THE MOST NOTORIOUSLY WICKED DIABOLIST APART FROM FAUST!
ALL COMERS WICKED DIABOLIST CHAMPIONSHIP
HIS ENEMIES SAID HE SLEPT ON THE MOON AT NIGHT...
ZZ
...AND HE ONCE LEFT A LECTURE ROOM IN GERMANY
FRANKFURT
PARIS
-ONLY TO ENTER ANOTHER IN FRANCE A SECOND LATER!
HIS PET DOGS WERE REGARDED AS DEMONIC FAMILIARS!
ON A TRIP TO ENGLAND, HE SHOWED THE EARL OF SURREY HIS DEAD MISTRESS IN A MAGIC MIRROR!
A FOOLISH STUDENT WHO TRIED TO PEEK INTO ONE OF HIS MAGIC BOOKS WAS TORN APART BY DEMONS!!
LAY OFF, YOU ROTTERS!
OW! OW! I WAS ONLY LOOKING FOR A BIT OF BEDTIME READING!...
OOH YAH!
THE MONEY THAT AGRIPPA PAID TO INNKEEPERS WOULD TURN INTO BONES AND DEAD LEAVES AS SOON AS HE WAS GONE!
OI! THIS IS A LEAF SHORT!
AND ON HIS DEATHBED, A DEMON IN THE SHAPE OF A DOG WAITED TO POUNCE ON HIS SOUL WHEN IT LEFT HIS BODY...
WALK?
BUT IN REALITY AGRIPPA WAS A GENTLE, WISE AND DEEPLY LEARNED MAN!
HIS BIG MISTAKE WAS TO ANNOY CHURCHMEN BY HUMILIATING THEM IN PUBLIC DEBATES...
HE WAS HIGHLY SARCASTIC...
YOU SMELL!
GASP!
THEY NEVER FORGAVE HIM!
SO THIS BRILLIANT MAN WAS HOUNDED AND DRIVEN INTO EXILE AND ABJECT POVERTY!
HE DIED A LONELY DEATH IN THE HOUSE OF A STRANGER
HEY! MISTER! YOU CAN'T DIE HERE!
BUT HE HAD THE LAST LAUGH! HISTORIANS NOW CONSIDER HIM ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT THINKERS OF HIS TIMES!
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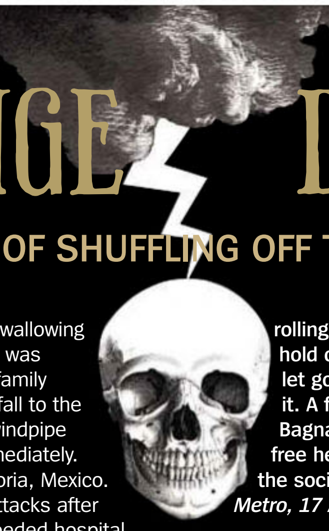

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

Tomas Rangel, 52, died after swallowing a bee that fell into the beer he was drinking. Horrified friends and family saw him clutch his throat and fall to the ground. Medics said that his windpipe started to contract almost immediately. He died in hospital in Villa Victoria, Mexico. His wife and sons had panic attacks after being told he was dead and needed hospital treatment. *Sun on Sunday, 9 Oct 2016.*

A vicar of Christ Embassy church, known only as Pastor Letsego, killed himself after accidentally sending a picture of his penis to all members of his congregation. He thought he had only sent the nude photo to his lover Miriam, with the caption: "Wife is away, it's all yours tonight"; but he used the church's WhatsApp group address. Parishioners bombarded the clumsy cleric to vent their outrage. His body was found hanging at his rented church house in Limpopo, South Africa, the next day. *mzansistories.com, 19 Sept; Metro, 20 Sept 2016.*

On 28 September Yang Qingpei, aged 26 or 27, argued with his parents over money and killed them in the village of Yema in China's southwestern Yunnan province. Fearing he would be identified as the killer, he then murdered 17 neighbours. The youngest victim was three, the oldest 72. Xinhua news agency didn't say how they were killed; firearms are tightly controlled in China, and mass killings are usually carried out with knives, poison, homemade explosives or by arson. Yang was arrested the next day in the provincial capital of Kunming, about 125 miles (200km) away. *[AP] BBC News, 30 Sept 2016.*

Andrew Hill, 23, was being taken by ambulance to Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, at 4:45am on 18 April when he became agitated and removed his restraints. The driver pulled over on the shoulder of the Downtown Connector, where Interstates 75 and 85 merge. Hill got out and ran across five lanes of traffic. He then tried to run back into traffic, where he was hit and killed. The crash blocked all northbound lanes of the freeway, leading to a massive traffic jam that lasted almost two hours. *[AP] 18 April 2016.*

A 72-year-old man strangled and dismembered his wife and encased her head in a concrete block, which he used to help drown himself in an Austrian lake. Officials said the man and his 71-year-old wife were from near Frankfurt in Germany, but did not identify them further. The corpse – with the block in a bag attached to one hand – was recovered by police divers from the waters of Traunsee on 4 January 2016, a day after two suitcases containing the woman's remains were found floating close to the lake shore near the town of Gmunden. A postmortem suggested that the woman was strangled between 25 December and 1 January. *[AP] Guardian, (Sydney) D.Telegraph, 7 Jan 2016.*

In what a coroner described as an "act of silliness", Heidi Chalkley, 40, was crushed to death by an automatic door to an underground car park on 14 August. She was pulled into the rolling metal shutter when she grabbed hold of it with both hands – meaning to let go – after pressing a button to open it. A friend who was with her at Ruth Bagnall Court flats in Cambridge tried to free her with the help of passers-by, but the social worker died immediately. *D.Mail, Metro, 17 Aug 2016.*

Balala Hakkula Sangham, a children's rights group, has called for the arrest of the parents of a 13-year-old Indian girl from the Jain community who died after observing a liquids-only religious fast for 68 days during the holy period of *Chaumasa*. Aradhana Samdhariya's heart stopped on 3 October, a day after her family held a procession in the southern city of Hyderabad to celebrate the end of her fast. Jains practise *Sallekhana* or *Santhara* (fasting with the intention of preparing for death – see **FT339:8**), but this is usually meant for elderly people who have lived their life and want renunciation. ''It has been a practice for people to undertake severe penance when they give up even food and water," said Lata Jain, a member of the community. "They are glorified, lauded and honoured at community meetings by the religious elders. They are also showered with gifts. But in this case it was a minor and that is my objection. This is suicide if not murder."

Aradhana had earlier undertaken a similar fast for 41 days and survived. At least 600 people attended her funeral, hailing her as a *bal tapasvi*. The funeral procession was called a *shobha yatra* – a mark of celebration. Aradhana's family runs a jewellery business and has a shop in Secunderabad. The Balala Hakkula Sangham rights group suspected that the parents coerced the girl, but her father, Lakshmi Chand Samdariya, denied this, saying: "She wanted to become a Jain nun, and had gone on fast twice in the past." *ndtv.com, 9 Oct; <i> 10 Oct; Guardian, 11 Oct 2016.*

A man from Iasi in Romania died after crashing the car he bought with an insurance payout after his parents were killed in a similar smash eight years earlier. Ionut Irimia, 21, lost control of his BMW, hit a lamppost and died at the scene. "He liked speed," said a neighbour. "He drove like the wheels were flying. His parents died the same way." *Sun, 23 Jan 2016.*

Julio Macias Gonzalez, 17, began convulsing at the dinner table with his family in Mexico City after spending time with his 24-year-old lover. It is thought the woman had given him a love bite, which caused a blood clot that travelled to the teenager's brain, triggering a stroke. Julio's family blamed the girlfriend for his death, but she could not be found. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 30 Aug 2016.*

Kathryn Bull, 39, was killed by her own horse when it bolted, pulling a rope tight around her neck as she was dragged 500ft (150m) across a field at the equestrian centre she owned in Blidworth, Nottinghamshire. For unknown reasons, the lead rope had been draped around her shoulders, forming a ligature in the freak accident. *D.Mirror, 18 Aug 2016.*

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